

IMPORTANT

This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees

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

AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

AJR

Winston House, 2 Dollis Park

London N3 1HF

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

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

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Interview Transcript Title Page



Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	168

Interviewee Surname:	Dubs
Forename:	Lord Alf
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	5 December 1932
Interviewee POB:	Prague, Czechoslovakia

Date of Interview:	7 March 2016
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Jana Buresova
Total Duration (HH:MM):	1 hour 8 minutes

REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV168
NAME: Lord Alf Dubs
DATE: 7th March, 2016
LOCATION: House of Lords, London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Jana Buresova

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

The interviewee is Lord Alf Dubs, and the interview is taking place in the House of Lords, on the 7th of March, 2016. Thank you very much indeed for agreeing to be interviewed for AJR.

We appreciate that immensely. Could we begin please by your telling us when and where you were born?

Yes, I was born in Prague in 1932, in December, December the 5th.

And what was your parents' work?

Well, my, my father, my father was in the textile – cotton textile business. He, he and his cousins had a business together. And he- I think he did the export or whatever - the sales side. And my Mum, well, I don't think she worked in the time that- after I was born, but she was trained as a dietitian. A nurse dietitian.

And when and how did you and your family escape, perhaps starting with your parents?

Well, it- what happened was that my- You see my father was Jewish and my mother wasn't; I should explain that. And so, my father...my father said to his cousins, if the Nazis come, he's getting out. And the cousins said, oh, they'll take their chance. And that was the end. And then in 1942 the Gestapo came for them. And one had a cyanide pill, and the other had...died in Auschwitz. I should say murdered in Auschwitz. But my father left pretty well the day the Germans occupied Prague, which was in March 1939.

Yes.

My Mum then put me on a Kindertransport. And I can't, you know, I should have looked this up. I think it was about June - June or July 1939. And don't forget I was very lucky, because my father was in London. He'd got to London. They refused my mother permission to leave. She...I mean this is all afterwards. And you know she went...wherever it was, the Gestapo headquarters - and they just threw her down the stairs and said, "We're not letting you go." And she landed in a heap at the bottom of the stairs. And before she tried to work out whether any bones were broken, she, she, she thought with pleasure, they'd thrown her passport after her. And somehow or other, one way or another, she got out. Somehow or other, she escaped. I don't actually know how she managed to do it, but she got to London on- on the 31st of August which is after all the day before the war started. So, it was absolutely the last possible occasion. So, to that extent I was luckier than most of the Kindertransport children, who

didn't have a parent waiting for them at Liverpool Street. Or who didn't meet their parents until years later when some of them had escaped by other, other routes to London.

[0:02:58]

How did you feel... leaving Prague, leaving your mother, and travelling to a strange country?

Well don't forget, I was six years old. So... I don't want to invent ideas that I didn't have at the time. I think I was pretty confused. Don't forget I'd seen the Germans come in. One of my vivid memories at school was that we'd had to tear a picture of President Benes out of our school books, and stick in a picture of Hitler. I'd seen German troops, you know, German Army, all over Prague. ...So, I was conscious things had changed dramatically. And... my mother kept saying, "Well, I'll be going to London." That didn't mean anything to me. I'd be seeing my father, which meant something. But I'd hardly seen him for a long time, so you know, he'd almost disappeared. And... So, I had that- something to look forward to. But I, I didn't understand what was happening. You see the older children on the Kindertransport, they knew. For example, when we got to the Dutch border, they cheered, because we were out of the reach of Nazi Germany. But that meant nothing to me except it obviously was significant, but I didn't understand the full meaning of it. So... I think I was pretty apprehensive. My mother had given me some sausages - sandwiches and sausages - to eat on the journey. And when I got to London my father discovered I'd eaten none of it; I hadn't touched my food for two days. So.... I don't know; I must have been a bit traumatised. But I - you know - one doesn't remember being traumatised. But... all I remember is I didn't understand what was happening. And I found it quite shocking, everything, I suppose.

[0:04:40]

It must have been terrifying.

Well... Yeah, I don't know whether I was terrified or not. I was bewildered. ...I didn't know anybody on the train. One of the older boys was supposed to be looking after me a bit but I didn't know anything about that. And the journey seemed interminably long. Don't forget we had those wooden seats. And... At one point a German soldier looked in and said something.

But he didn't molest us in any way. He didn't tip out suitcases and things, which they did to some others. And... And so, so we, we got to the Dutch border and on to Hook of Holland.

And your father met you...?

Well then, we got the boat and then we- to Harwich and then we were medically examined, and then we got to Liverpool Street and we all had dog-tags on. And we had to be checked off. So, somebody fetching everybody, either a relative or a parent or a foster-parent. So, we- and then my father took me to where he was living in Belsize Park. Well, they all seemed to be living in Belsize Park [laughing] or Swiss Cottage. So, he took me there.

Was it a hostel, because the Czech Refugee Trust Fund had lots of hostels?

No wasn't a hostel; he was in a bed-sitter. But then Belsize Park and Swiss Cottage were full of bed-sitters.

Yes.

But because he didn't know what to do with me. And. So... I'm trying to remember. There was a little boarding school in South London where I went from Mondays or Sundays to Fridays. And it was a funny little place, but it had mainly refugee children and they were teaching us English. For about two months or six weeks or so. But then, you know you learn English pretty quickly if you need to survive in a school playground.

How did you discover, that Nicholas Winton had effectively rescued you? And when did you first meet him?

Oh... I knew I'd come- of course I knew I'd come on the Kindertransport, but I knew nothing about Nicholas Winton until many years later when there was a television programme. And curiously, they showed, on the screen, ...a list of names of children who were on a particular train. And my - my name was there. And my father-in-law phoned and said, "For heaven's sake. Did you know this?" And then after that there were a lot of television programmes. Nicky Winton was on 'This is Your Life' and so on, and so I met him many times. But it was

extraordinary meeting somebody, all the years after I'd actually arrived on a Kindertransport. And realising there was a lot about what had happened that I didn't know till then.

[0:07:20]

Yes. Was it the Esther Rantzen programme that you met him?

Well, I think- I think it was, yes.

And did you become close to him?

Well, yes, I did. First of all, he loved politics. He loved talking politics, and... he was a great conversationalist. And so, he- he was very interested in those Kinder who, you know, who were around. And, and- look, I didn't discover until later that he'd stood – it pleased me enormously – he'd stood as a Labour Candidate for Maidenhead Council in 1954-'55. And actually, on his election address, which is in Barbara Winton's book, his letter to voters - of course he didn't win, because Maidenhead was as Conservative then as it is now – but he actually said he- it said he'd helped children to escape from - Jewish children - to escape from Nazi Germany. But that was all, and people hadn't really picked - picked it, picked it up very much.

No...no.

And of course, he loved to talk about politics. He knew some of the ...eminent Labour figures of the old days, you know, Nye Bevan, George Strauss and so on. So- he was much, a good old Leftie, he was. Quite critical of Tony Blair, in some respects. And of course, all that delighted me, because there was lots to talk about.

Indeed...

So, you know, we had that as a topic of conversation. And he- he was- he could be quite caustic, not with me, but he could be caustic about people, things he didn't like and so on. But he was a great companion. And you know, he was, he was a delight to, to be with, and to

have lunch with and to talk to because he was so engaging and there were lots of things- We never ran out of conversation.

I'm sure you didn't.

No, we did not. [laughing]

Are you still in touch with any of your fellow Kindertransport children?

Well, yes, of course I'm, I'm in touch with, with Milena.

Milena Grenfell Baines?

Yes, of course, Milena Grenfell Baines. We all...She's absolutely such a star figure...keeping in touch with everybody. I'm not in touch with many- I have a friend who did come out of Prague but not a Kindertransport. I'm friendly with him... quite friendly with him. But on the whole, I'm not really. Of course, I was in touch with Vera, but Vera's not been so well, lately.

Vera Gissing.

And then there were various other people that used to come to England, or perhaps who didn't live in England all the time. And occasionally I used to meet them but it's all stopping a bit now, I'm afraid. You know, and don't forget, I was one of the youngest. And... you know, they're getting older and they're either dying or they're not well enough to travel. You know, so, so, we're losing touch a bit. It's inevitable but it's sad.

It is sad.

Because earlier on, we used to have reunions, we used to get together and we used to chat and gossip and so on. And there was of course a day when there was a big international reunion of Kindertransport children. And for all countries, not just from Czechoslovakia. And that was when we put up a plaque in – you know about the plaque. We put up a plaque in, in the- Just off the central lobby, which is a thank you by 10,000 children to the people of

Britain for having let us in...you know, and giving us safety. And I'm sure you've got a photograph of it, but it's worth getting one. It's quite a, you know, it's a significant thing. And so, there was a big reunion that day when Kindertransport children came from all over the world. And of course, that was about ten or fifteen years ago so you know, there were a lot of us then.

[0:10:50]

How did that come about, and were you involved in organising it?

No, I wasn't. I'm afraid I wasn't. I was just told it was happening and I was invited to several of the events. And there was a conference I think at the Institute of Education or somewhere and I went to that. And it was, it was a very big occasion. But, but I'm afraid- you'll have to ask- I'm sure Milena will know who... I'm sure Milena had a big part in organising it. I'm afraid I didn't know. I just went to the things I was invited to go to. I spoke at one of the occasions and met a lot of people.

Were you there when the plaque was actually put up?

Yes. Yes. And the plaque was put up as part of the two- or three-day event. And I was there – it's a little corridor, and I was there when the plaque was put up. And then there was a reception; I think Betty Boothroyd was then the Speaker of the Commons, and there was a reception for us all following the putting up of the plaque.

Did that move you a great deal? Did it bring back memories?

I think it did. ...Yes. I think it did because I met people; we talked. Yes, it did. Of course, in the early days, when, when there was a lot of media interest in all this, I was interviewed a few times. And I found that quite... quite moving. You know, I don't mean I'm cynical now, but it was the first few times, it brought back all the memories in, in, in such a rush and, and I found that quite upsetting. But then as time goes on, you know, I have to steel myself. But I still, I still find it sometimes quite upsetting...Occasions when people get together and there are things. And of course, Nicky...you know...the last- I saw Nicky Winton. I used to go to his birthday parties. Sometimes they were at the Czech Embassy, and then, obviously they

were in Maidenhead. On one occasion, the Home Secretary Theresa May came along. I said, I said to her, "This is great. I suppose there aren't many constituents that are 104. I think it was then. Where are the media?" [laughing] And there was a whole load of cameras behind. But I mean, that's normal. No, and then of course I went to his 106th birthday party, and that was about, a little while before he died. And in a way it was, I'm so glad, it almost a way of saying goodbye to him because I - I sensed at that point he was fading. See, a few years earlier I'd say to Nicky, "How are you?" And he used to say, "I'm fine from the neck upwards." But then on that occasion he was fading, and we had a birthday cake with candles and things which were blown out for him. And I spoke to him a little bit. But I did have the sense he was fading and so for me it was important that I'd been there, because it was a way of saying goodbye. Because I didn't think that there'd be another birthday; somehow, I had that feeling.

Yes...

You know, but I've been to lots of his birthday parties. It isn't bad going to birthday parties: 106, 105, 104, 103, 102 and so on. [laughing] Not many of us have a chance to be at a birthday party like that.

[0:13:50]

Indeed. Indeed. You must feel very gratified that he's been so honoured by the Czech Government over the years.

Yes, I am. And I'm even glad that he got a bit of an honour from the British Government, though it took a long time for the British Government to acknowledge. You know, the Czech Government and I think the Israeli Government, they went out of their way very quickly to acknowledge, you know, what he'd done. And I'm delighted the Czech Government has done that. So even not so long ago, he was there in Prague for an event. So, these are all special occasions, and ...I think it's good the Czech Government paid the tributes that ...he deserved.

We can hear Big Ben.

Yes, well, that's all right, that's all part of the building.

Where did you study, and which of the Czech boarding schools established by the Government in exile did you attend?

Well, I went- First of all they had a- it's quite complicated. Can I just go back a bit? Because, what happened was, we went- My father was offered a job in Northern Ireland of all places, by somebody who'd left Prague years before. A friend of his... who'd got all his money out and so on. And, he said, said to my father, "If you ever get out, I, I might be able to give you a job." And this chap was, as a foreigner was allowed to set up a ...cotton textile factory...either in Scotland or Northern Ireland where there was heavy unemployment. So, he found a disused factory, in...in Northern Ireland, near a place called Cookstown. And when he wrote to my mother, and said, "If you ever get out, we're going to Cookstown." And my Mum looked at the map and said, "Oh, we're going to Australia!" [both laugh] Anyway, so we went there, and then within a few months my father had a heart attack and died. So...so my mother then had some refugee friends from Vienna, living in Manchester. And she went to Manchester with me. And put me- Got me into a Czech boarding school. Now there, there was a primary school and a secondary school. Most of my time I was in Abernant. But before that I, I, I was at Maesfen Hall, you know, just for one term before I, before I went on, on, on to Abernant where I spent two-and-a-half years or so.

[0:16:26]

Was there a lot of bonding amongst the pupils because of your backgrounds?

Well, I suppose there must have been. Don't forget I'd not been to a boarding school before, so... ..Yes, I mean, obviously I have at least one friend from there – still there. I had other friends; some of them have sadly died. So, some of us kept in touch. Yes. It depends which year, you see? If you're in the first year, and Milena was I think in the second year, and people in second year are gods! You know, you know, you look at them and you think you're not on equal footing, on equal footing with your own crew! [both laugh] So... I know Milena always laughed when I said I saw her as one of the gods and for the second [inaudible]. Anyway. Anyway. Yeah, of course there was some bonding and there were some reunions as well... in earlier years. At that time, I was in the House of Commons and I went for one of

the reunions to, to Abernant. And of course, we all met and I, and I remembered some of the older ones who'd played- you know, who'd scored goals on the football team and so on, and they were absolute gods to me of course. So, you know, I met people. And, you know, they came from all over the world for these reunions. And you know, some of them had done tremendously well. And they even allowed some of them to come from- Even the Communist Regime in Prague allowed a couple of them to come to – to come to Abernant. So that was quite - quite interesting.

Did you attend the special reunion organised by Pavel Seifter when he became Ambassador to London, having been...a ...a non-person for so long in...?

Well, first of all, Pavel– I got to know Pavel Seifter very well because although he was at, he was at I think, Maesfen Hall, I didn't actually get to know him there, at least not consciously. Yeah, I got to know him when he was Ambassador here. In fact, he's coming to have a cup of coffee with me...I think tomorrow or the day after. So, we...we stay in touch. So, yes, I went to the reunions that he organised, certainly. And he did a lot at the Czech Embassy of course, and Pavel is a great guy.

[0:18:29]

Indeed.

You know. And he's told me so many stories about what happened, you know... when the Communists took over, and when the Communists fell.

Yes.

Do you want those stories? OK, well, I mean there are two or three. One is, when - when the Soviets invaded Prague, put down the Prague thing in '68, Pavel lost his job. And for twenty years was a window cleaner. And I said to Pavel, "That must have been, you know, twenty years of your life...window cleaning?" He said, "No, no, no! It was good! We spent an hour talking politics before we started. And then we talked politics all day as we cleaned the windows." He said, "Don't forget, I only had a PhD. I was academically the least well qualified of the window cleaners!" [laughs] And... And then he said- And another story he

told about a friend of his. I think he was...the name will come to me. [Jiri Dienstbier] And... This guy was a night stoker ...he did the boilers. And when the Communists fell in ...in '89, the, the, the Communist government fell so quickly, that a lot of Communists in the system didn't realise that their government had finished. So, this chap phoned up and said, "I'm sorry I can't come and do the – do the boilers tonight." "Why not?" "Well, I've just been made Foreign Minister." So, he said, "Does that mean you can't come tomorrow night either?" [laughs] Anyway, these are all true stories. And... And then, after the Communists fell, the President, who was a good friend of Pavel Seifter's says, "Come up to Hradcany [Prague Castle, seat of the government], I want to talk to you." And he said, he said, "Look I want you to be Head of my Foreign Affairs team at the Presidency." And Pavel said, "Well look, I've just got back to my old job at the University. You know, can I – I need to think about that." And the President said, "Yeah, I knew you'd want that. Look, I tell you what: walk out of the castle, walk round and in twenty minutes you'll be back and tell me..." So, he did; he accepted it. And then he became Ambassador to London. So, he, he became a good friend. And he's still a good friend. So that was all part of- These are the things that go on when you have something in common. And Pavel was very good at the Embassy at keeping people together.

[0:20:43]

Is that something that is very important for you in your life, ...this link, this bond?

Well, you know, I find that a difficult question, because for some, for some of my contemporaries, or some of the older ones... Particularly for the older ones, it became almost a main mission in life, to keep in touch. To write about their experiences and so on. Well, I think I was about twelve or thirteen, and my Mum, no husband, widow, no money. And she talked about a 'golden age' when she'd been living in Prague. Well, I didn't have a golden age, because I was too young in Prague – I was four, five, six. So, it didn't resonate with me. So, to be quite honest, it is important but not as important as for some people. And because I felt that, you know, I felt that I had to move on. And I respect people who... are very much involved in the past. And I think it's important we don't forget the history. But sometimes I go because I feel I ought to go to some events. Because otherwise they think because I'm in public life I'm a terrible snob not, not doing it. So, I do go, but I don't have quite the feeling about the past that some of them do. But I think it's so important we do remember the past.

This must never, never, never be forgotten. But you know, I can't live it- I can't live it. I also felt, from the age of eleven or twelve, that I had to move forward. So, and yet I know that... I know that one of the women who came on the Kindertransport, she said to me that - I think she had a boyfriend then, or another one – she said, “He doesn't come to these events; he can't bear them.” You know?

Mnn. Too painful.

Too painful, yes. So maybe I'm protecting myself rather than anything else by- but I do go. But I'm- you know, and I find some of them very difficult and some of them ...easier.

But it's very courageous of you when you feel that way.

Well, yes and no. I don't think it's particularly courageous. You know, so many people have had a much worse time of it than I have. I mean, look, the Holocaust Memorial Trust, who do a- or the Holocaust Education Trust, they do such a wonderful job. And they have events here. An event here, and they had survivors of the camps. Now they are very, very special people. And I was walking along saying hello to them and they said what's my connection. And I said I came on a Kindertransport. And they said, “Oh, fantastic.” And I said, “Well compared to you it's nothing. I just got on a train. You survived the most ...terrible ordeal that a human being can survive.” So, one has to keep thing in perspective, you know? That... I was lucky.

[0:23:18]

How did your mother manage, alone, a foreigner, in Britain?

Well, it was quite difficult for her. I mean I didn't realise how difficult until I got a bit older. She, well, we couldn't survive in Northern Ireland because she had no income and nothing. So, we went to Manchester... where she had some family friends from... actually from Vienna. And she got a job in a British Restaurant. Do you know what British Restaurants were? I think I'd better- can I explain that? In the war, the government- most factories were war factories. You know, they were producing stuff to do with the war effort. And, and they were quickly set up. And of course, they didn't have canteens. So, they set up a network of

restaurants called 'British Restaurants' near where the war factories were. And so, the workers in the war factories could go and have lunch. And my Mum got, went to- she started working in one in Cheetham Hill in Manchester, and she started scrubbing floors. Because you know- jobs. And- mind you, I was free at the boarding school, at the Czech school, so in that sense...

Yes.

But... At least I think I was free. Mum couldn't have afforded it. And so, I watched as my mother, I learnt about my mother you know, from her scrubbing floors. And then she had a bit of promotion. And so, she... But she found it very difficult. And then, and then I mean she had - then, after the war British Restaurants became - were transformed into School Meal Service. And she worked there. And eventually, she got a job in Blackburn as a Number Two organising it. And the Number One left, and my mum acted up, and applied for the job and was turned down. They didn't fill the post; she acted up again. They advertised again; she applied for the job again, and she was turned down. And she heard one of the interviewers say, "We're not giving a job to that bloody foreigner!" So, she- I know, I remember her being incredibly upset. And she went all around and tried to find a job. And eventually, she - she got a job in the Isle of Wight, curiously. And moved there. And- but it had been difficult for her, yes. I think she had a really tough time. I think she did. I suppose I can say, I think during the war, after, about two years after my father died, no, we were still in Northern Ireland. And I think she met an American officer and she had an affair with him. I don't know if she had an affair with him or not, but looking back, I think she must have done. But at the age of seven or eight one isn't supposed to know about one's parents' sex-lives. [both laugh] But I'm pretty sure, because she was incredibly upset when they went off to fight, you know they went off I think to Italy. And that was the end of it. One or two letters came, and then he got injured and... I don't know. So, she found that upsetting and I think it was- I think it was very difficult for her.

[0:26:26]

Did she get very depressed by life, and the problems?

Well, if she did, she hid it. I think she hid it. And then towards the end she, she managed to get a flat as opposed to living in digs, in the Isle of Wight. We'd lived in digs all the time. And, and I mean, for a long time she just had a bedsitter, so when I came home from school, we shared the little bedsitter in Manchester. And then in Blackburn. But she had moved to the Isle of Wight, and she managed to get a little flat. And she said- and then she was diagnosed with leukaemia. And then she said, "What a pity," she said, "For the first time in my life it's taken a turn for the better! And now it's all, you know, now it's all... Not so good now." But, you know, life... Life. These things happen.

When did she die?

Well, she died when I was... wait a minute. She died in 1960, I think. She was in her fifties, and I was in my mid-twenties.

What then ...decided you and your mother to remain in Britain after the war, rather than return to Czechoslovakia?

Well, well she went back to Prague in about 1946, '47. Soon as she could. She went back; had a look. And... And... you know, she came back, she said, well, our flat had gone. There was no flat. Nowhere to live. No job. None of our friends and relatives... I mean, I mean they'd all either died in the camps, or had managed to escape the country. So, there was nobody there anymore! You know, just, they were not there! I mean most of our friends were Jewish and they'd either fled the country or, or they died, killed in the camps. So, there was nothing she said, "There's nothing for me. I can't... In England I've got a job. My son's being educated in school..." You know, "...it's- It doesn't make sense for me to go there." And she said, "Anyway, everyone was talking about the Communists coming." And so on. And it was all very difficult. So, it was a fairly easy decision for her I think, in the event. Because you're, you're balancing up a home and a job, against no home and no job.

[0:28:55]

Mnn. Focussing now on your Parliamentary...

Sorry, could I? There was just, wait a minute, there was something I wanted to mention earlier which somehow...

Please do.

Oh yes, can I go way back? This is something of a story. We're still in Prague. And my parents were obviously very anxious. This was ...after the Anschluss. The Germans were in Austria. Hitler was in Austria already. And... And, and my mother went to - went to Vienna to see some friends. Really to find out what was happening. Cause, you know...And she said the friends there - we didn't have a car - they had a car. And they drove to the suburbs of Vienna, kept the engine running, and then told her what was happening, in Vienna, under the Nazis. And I thought that was something I remember even as a, even as a - as a child. And it was quite ominous. You know and you can see, keep the car engine running in case there's some, in case the conversation is being overheard. Don't do it indoors. Don't do it in the middle of Vienna. Go out to the suburbs and so on. And I think that, that meant that was something quite significant about that. The question I never was able to ask my father, was, because he wasn't political. The question I could never ask him was, you know, what was it that made you leave Prague, as soon as the Nazis occupied when your cousin stayed and most of the Jews in Europe seemed to wait for their- wait for their fate rather than. And he wasn't political. I could never ask him that, because you know, I wasn't- I wasn't able to. The only other thing about him is this, that he fought in the Austro-Hungarian Army, in, in the First World War. And he was injured and gassed and all sorts of things. In fact, in 1914 he was opposite the British when they stopped fighting. And I remember him saying he swapped cigars with a British officer. So that's by the way; it amuses people in England. I find that, I find...[half-laughs]. But, but... when I was a child, I was never allowed to have guns or tanks or rifles. I was not allowed to have anything to shoot with. At all. I could have tractors, and he just wouldn't allow it.

Mnn...

And then when the war started, as soon as the war started, he came in one day and gave me a box of tin soldiers. Which to me was a real sign of, you know, defeat. You know, in a way that... he decided there's no point in my not having weapons of - weapons of war, because

there was a war anyway. But it was just something that I remember about him. Anyway. I jumped; you asked me a different question.

[0:31:32]

Oh, no, that's fine. That's fine. Do you have great regrets not being able to speak to him?

Oh yeah, massive. Well, both and my Mum actually, because even though, there were all sorts of things, millions of things I would have liked to ask them and it's gone. You know, how does one? I don't know how to... it's just gone and, and, and... I'm afraid there's nobody I know, and no way I know I could ever find out. But really, it's what he was thinking I wanted to know; I know about him in the First World War. But I really want to know what he was thinking. [half-laughs] Funny, there was once- I remember, just before he died, there was a film on the cinema in Cookstown in Northern Ireland. I'm jumping about a bit. Anyway, he- he was in the cinema, but being a foreigner, he had to be in for curfew, which was – I don't know, nine or ten o'clock in the evening - sometime early in the evening. And I wasn't, because I was under sixteen, I wasn't subject to it. So, he told the policeman he was going home because of the curfew, and I'd follow. [laughs] Weird... Weird that, that I could wander around. Still, it was a little village, a little town.

Did you think perhaps that...after your father's experiences in World War One that it was too painful for him to see you with a gun, and soldiers?

Yes, I think so. I think, I think that was it. I think he didn't... I mean he wasn't a pacifist because he tried to join the Home Guard. But being a foreigner, he wasn't able to. But, but, no, he, I just think, I think he found the experiences of war so horrible and painful, that he... He didn't want me to be brought up in that sort of culture.

No... Because I had wondered who helped him to escape? Whether the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia...?

No, no, he left- I think he left the day after the Germans occupied Prague. They hadn't- you know, there were no- he just got a train and went.

Oh, so he was still able to leave...?

If you did it quickly enough, you could just get out. There were no- there were no controls. Anyway, Nazi policy was a bit odd about Jews, because at one point they wanted to get rid of them, and afterwards they wanted to kill them. You know. And, and I think with the Kindertransport they were glad to get rid of Jewish children, you see? So, they went through different phases. But I think he wasn't taking any chances. I just think he ...He decided he would go, and I think it was just possible if one went quickly enough. Other people managed it later but... he wasn't taking any chances.

[0:34:06]

No. Was there anything else that you wanted to say in that regard?

No...probably, probably by the time you've finished I could tell... No, it's memory is a complicated thing. Oh, there was- there was one thing. I went to Prague- well actually I went to Prague on holiday. It was after my Mum died, so it was 1960. We took a battered old car there. Just- because my Mum had said, "You mustn't go because they'll..." Because being a Czech, you know, although I was British by then, I was Czech.

Yes.

So anyway, we went and ...And then we went on together. In Vienna we met somebody who'd been a good friend of ours, in Prague. Her husband had died in the camps, and she'd survived. And she said, "Just a minute." And she came back with a plate. And they used to have a- she and her husband used to rent a house just outside Prague in the pine forest. It was very gloomy and they used to send me around every Seder and they sent me round, you know, looking for firewood. And I found it very frightening, you know, these central European pine forests, 'cause I was four or five then... Anyway. She came back...

In 1960?

No, sorry, I jumped. That was before the war and we used to go there.

Yes...ah.

We went there; my Mum and I went there. We'd take the tram out of Prague and then he'd meet us in the car. And he had a lot of people staying. Anyway, she bought me this plate and gave it to me. And the plate had all the people who'd stayed there... in the summer of ...'38 or '39; I can't remember. Anyway. And there were all the names there, and she went around all the names. And with the exception of herself, myself and one other person there, everybody was dead. Mostly died in the camps. And that was quite ominous, you know, cause... 'cause they were mostly Jewish and, and they'd all died in a camp. And she went around everyone that was on that plate. I found that quite awesome, quite ...an emotional thing.

[0:36:05]

What you were saying about your visit, and... also keeping the motor going of the car, outside Vienna, so that people wouldn't overhear. Very much like the Communist era, where people simply would not speak in public places, or even in their homes if they could avoid doing so.

Yes, absolutely. It was like that. Because...

There are parallels.

Yes, yes, oh absolutely parallels. Yes, I mean there was a ...fear of the secret police. So, my mother must have learnt a lot in Vienna from her friends, when other people were denying or didn't know these things were happening. Anyway, that was all part of the, part of the time way back. And then came the plate on my visit to Prague, so I...I...I've still got the plate.

You have it in your personal possessions?

Somewhere. Somewhere.

That's a very special...

Well, I suppose so but again, I don't know all the people anymore. I don't...If I ever knew them. They were all adults. I was a child.

[0:37:20]

Mnn. ...Now we move to your Parliamentary work. What prompted you to go into politics?

Ah, well, I think this is what I felt at the time; I'm not trying to be clever after the event. I think, when I was about ...twelve or thirteen I began to – or even before that – I began – perhaps earlier - I began to realise what had happened, and learn about what had happened, with the Nazis and so on. Fully. Perhaps I was even younger than that. And I decided that if evil men in politics one can do such dreadful things, maybe in politics one can also do other things for the better. Don't leave, don't leave politics only to evil men. So, I was passionately interested in politics in my teens, when most of my contemporaries, you know, didn't give it a thought. And I think that – that passionate interest stayed with me. And I went to LSE because I thought that's the most political place to go. I was Labour - passionately. I remember the 1945 election and looking at all the election posters. Oh, I must tell you this. So, my Mum took me to a boarding house for a week, near Blackpool, you know, from Manchester or Blackburn or somewhere. And because of the Armed Forces votes, the soldiers, the Armed Forces were all in the far east. And they sent their...ballot papers back. So, they didn't count the votes on election night, they started them six weeks later, and started in the morning. In the morning, because they had all the ballot papers together. And ...And because there was no television in those days, and so the people in the boarding house said, "Go and find out what the lunchtime score is." Lunchtime score being the BBC would – would have a loudspeaker in the, in the little square there. And I went ...to find out what it was. So, I remember it was something like, the lunchtime score, I went back very proudly and said- They said, "What's happening?" "Well, the results so far: Labour- 130, Conservatives- 25." And, and somebody said, I heard somebody say, "Oh, my God! It's the end of England!" And that made me more firmly Labour than ever. [Jana laughs] So...so then I was passionately interested in politics. And my ambition- I said the only thing I can ever do is become a Local Councillor. Because with my background, I'm just not qualified. I'll never make it as anything more than that so... My ambition was to become a Local Councillor. And then, I met a friend, friend in the local Labour Party, and he was an MP and he said, "Look, you should have a go!" And I began meeting a few more MPs. And in the

end, as I say to people when I talk to them, I said, and I decided “If they can become MPs, anybody can have a go; nobody should hold back.” So, I decided I shouldn’t be too modest and just keep going. But I became a Local Councillor and then I stood for Parliament.

[0:40:15]

Where did you stand for Parliament?

Well, very odd. Actually, in 1970 I was selected as a Labour candidate for the Cities of London and Westminster. OK? And my opponent was Christopher Tugendhat. So, there you have- there you have a Jewish refugee from Vienna, fighting the City of London and Westminster ...against a Jewish refugee from Prague, and the media didn’t pick it up, that the heart of the Empire was being contested by two refugees from Central Europe. And somehow didn’t pick it up at all! And he’s now of course a colleague in the Lords now, Christopher Tugendhat. So...so it- that was quite a little thing. Anyway. That was quite a funny little thing to happen. And then, oh, then I stood again... in South Herts in ‘74, and I didn’t- in the second election of ‘74 I lost by 2,000. Didn’t quite do it. And then I was selected for South Battersea in ‘79, and I wasn’t supposed to win, because it was all moving away from Labour in ‘79. But I managed to win by 300 votes.

That must have been a very proud moment that you had achieved your goal.

I don’t know. I was a bit apprehensive, really. Because not having expected to win, because there was a big tide against Labour in ‘79. You know, I hadn’t mentally prepared myself for winning. And indeed, half-way through when the results were coming in, they were counting Battersea North and Battersea South in the same- in Battersea Town Hall. And I went to Douglas Jay, who was the MP for Battersea North, and I said, “Look, Douglas, I’ve had it.” And he said, “Well, given the swing it will be very difficult for you to win.” So, in the end I did win; I was quite...quite - quite amazed. I hadn’t mentally prepared for it you see, so I had to- I had to resign my job and...

A big adjustment.

Yeah! Oh, massive, yes.

Yes. Much of your parliamentary work interrelates with human rights...

Well, some of it, yes. Yes.

And...for example your support for the persecuted Ahmadiyya. Has the Holocaust made you more empathetic do you think?

I should think so; I mean they were only one group.

Indeed.

But there were many, yes. Well, you see the irony is- well, yes, I think it did make me more sympathetic cause I was always committed to racial equality and human rights and so on. I became Chair of the Westminster Community Relations Council for example and things like that. But two quite amusing things happened in Parliament. One is that I- I was on the Standing Committee - or now the Public Bill Committee - dealing with British Nationality Act. So, there I was, a refugee, working, you know, legislating on, on, on British nationality law and things like that. You know, [Enoch] Powell was a member of that Committee as well. It was quite- quite interesting that I was able to be a member of that committee and...and pronounce a bit on British Nationality Law. And then, later on, I became, in my second term in Parliament, I was put on the Front Bench in the Home Affairs team. And I was looking after Immigration and Race Relations Policy. So, it was... nice to have that chance.

Did you feel that you could influence that policy, or did you find it very frustrating?

Both.

Both. [half-laughs]

Both, both. Both! Of course, it was frustrating cause I was in opposition and so on. But I- you know, I could have my say and I had... I had people with immigration difficulties in my constituency I could help. And things like that. So...I felt I could make some difference

anyway, but not as much as I'd want to. Of course, there are always frustrations in being in opposition.

[0:44:12]

Did you find it gratifying, given your background, helping people when they approached you about immigration or asylum issues?

Yeah, I think I did, actually. Yes, I did quite a lot, a lot of that and I had quite a big case-load on immigration asylum work. So, I was quite happy to, you know, really get involved in that and do what I could. Yes. So, it...yes. It kept me quite busy anyway. And... And sometimes- in those days, MPs had more influence. If somebody was about to be removed, I could phone the Home Office and say...say, "I want...Can you put a stop on their removal while I make further representations?" So, it was a way of helping. And sometimes of course, the further representations worked and they were allowed to stay.

To what extent do you think your background has informed your policy decisions, particularly regarding refugee issues?

Oh, I think quite a lot. I mean, for example, at the moment we're dealing with the Immigration Bill. And I have an Amendment down, that the government should allow 3,000 unaccompanied children into Britain. Unaccompanied children who are somewhere in Europe, in Calais, or wherever it is. And that's got quite a lot of attention. I think partly 'cause, although I don't like using my own past as a political argument, I have used it a bit this time. Or other people have used it. Cause- and if I say, "Look, I came to Britain with a Kindertransport, on a Kindertransport, and I was given these opportunities, by this country, wonderful opportunities by Britain. And I would like others to have the same opportunities." I just feel you know that is something I can do. We might even win, win that amendment. I don't know. It's- of course if we win it in the Lords, the Government may overturn it in the Commons. But certainly, that's quite a head of steam. So that will be- I think it will be next week. So, you're very topical. [half-laugh] But I don't want to predict we'll win because it depends on lots of things, and the government are looking for a way out - a compromise, and so on. But yeah- yeah, I do feel- I do feel having had such enormous advantages and benefits and privileges, I should also...I should also campaign, battle, argue for others to have- who

also need help and support and who are victims of terrible situations. I do like to say that Britain was the only country that took Kindertransport children in Europe. None of the other countries did, so, at least not to the extent that Nicholas Winton managed to persuade the British Government. So, I use that as an argument saying Britain was foremost in Europe in dealing with this. Probably the only country. And... we shouldn't be slamming, slamming the door on others. Doesn't mean that you can open the door to anybody. But I think unaccompanied children would be a particular priority I'd have thought.

[0:47:28]

What impact do you feel you had as Director of the Refugee Council and Trustee of the Immigration Advisory Service?

Well, I think the main thing was the Refugee Council; that was a full-time job. Gosh, it was the hardest job I've ever done!

I can believe it.

I have to say, I'll just tell you about being interviewed for the job. Because I was unemployed for a year when I lost my seat in the Commons, I was unemployed for a year. It's quite hard, you know...

Yes.

...trying and find work. My unemployment benefit was £31.45 a week; I remember that. Anyway. My wife was working a bit part-time; she was teaching, but even so. Anyway I- so I went for this interview, and Lord Chitnis who was Asian origin, he was the Chair of the Refugee Council. And the interview was going badly. So, in desperate, you know how interview... so in desperation I said, "Look," I said, "I am a refugee!" And he looked at me and he said, "You're no more a refugee than I am black!" So, I said, "Well, that's only a matter of opinion." Anyway- I got the job. But then we got to the AGM of the Refugee Council and all the member agencies in Central Hall, Westminster. And I wasn't in post yet, but I was about to take post. And he said, "Oh, we've got our new Director, Alf Dubs. And the first time in the Refugee Council - he is a refugee!" So, in a coffee break I said, "Hang on

a minute. At the interview you said I'm no more a refugee than you are black. And now you- and now you're boasting about it!" "Ah, Alf," he said, "That's politics." [Jana laughs] Which is true. But it- it was helpful. So yes, I think...I found it hardest, probably one of the hardest things I've ever done. And we had Bosnians who came from the Serb detention camps and things like that. And we were arguing about policy and we were also arranging reception facilities. We had programmes to train refugees, give them job experience and so on. So yes, I think it was satisfying to be able to do it. I certainly; I certainly felt very committed to it, and delighted to be able to do it.

[0:49:39]

And as... Trustee of the IAS...

Well, that was really, you know, we were just looking at, providing legal advice to, to, to people that needed help who are on immigration arguments and who are on, on asylum arguments. So that wasn't- I didn't do so much there. I was simply a Trustee. We kept the thing- kept the thing going.

And how long were you with the Refugee Council?

I was with them from 1988 until '75 [he means '95]; it was a year after I got in the Lords. Cause I was sort of- there was a handover. So, '88 to '75 – sorry I'm getting- '88 to '95...seven years. Seven-and-a-half years.

In a way you've partly answered my next question, but I'm sure there are other things that you're currently involved in, regarding human rights or refugee causes.

Well, because it isn't only refugee causes and human rights...

No...

And I was Chair of Liberty for some years as well. So...well- well there are, there are so many, but as I say, the Immigration Bill and the amendments to that. I normally do try and get involved in issues to do with refugees and immigration. But I'm also involved in – in a

whole range of other issues. Don't forget I was a Minister in Northern Ireland for three years. So, I'm quite involved in things to do with Northern Ireland. And I still am, not as a Minister of course, but that was quite an interesting period as well.

A dangerous one?

Well, we had a Peace Process, and you know I got a phone call from after the '79 election; I think I was still hung over. Tony Blair phoned me up and I didn't think- he said would I like to go to Northern Ireland? So, I said "Yes!" - in surprise. I had been interested in Northern Ireland anyway. And- so I got there and you know you arrive from London. You get there. In the airport there's an armoured bullet-proof car with two close protection officers and you can only sleep in a secure zone, and all that stuff, while you're there. So, it was different, but I didn't feel it was dangerous. I suppose it was up to a point, but I was very well looked after. It was very interesting.

The recent days have proven dangerous as well, in Ireland.

It's not over yet, no. But it's a lot better than it was. And the progress has been- has been enormous, I think. And it's quite satisfying to have been there and you know, made a contribution to the – to the peace process. Obviously, the main contribution was made by Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam... and by Bertie Ahern, from, in a sense. And George Mitchell. But we all tried to help, with that.

What...?

Sorry, can I say? I got; I got to Northern Ireland and an official said, "We didn't know you used to live in Cookstown." So, I said, "Oh yes." So, one of the Councillors in Cookstown, at a Cookstown District Council meeting had said, "The new Minister's lived in Cookstown. And his father's buried there." And so, an official said that to me and I said, "Well, look. I was there for two-and-a-half years or so. That's too long to deny, but not long enough to claim Northern Ireland credentials." So, I said nothing.

[0:53:16]

Were you invited there- back to Cookstown? Did you go back?

Well, I met- well... Well, of course as part of my job, I went all over. But I also met school friends. I got off the plane once and a, a friend of mine – this is a school friend from Northern Ireland – got off the plane; he was the richest man in Northern Ireland, funnily enough. Got off the plane and introduced himself. And I've had several evenings with him. He died a few years ago, so- and he'd introduced me to other people again, people I'd known. So, the answer is yes!

The world is full of unexpected links like that.

Yes. Yes, yes.

Yes. What issues currently concern you most of all?

Oh...goodness me. Well, I had- just two things happen in the recent past. I campaigned to ban cluster bombs and cluster munitions. And they are shells or ...bombs that split up into little bomblets and lie on the ground, in several hundreds of these. And the problem is that some of them don't always explode. And then after conflict, people, civilians, children step on them and have their legs blown off. It was the follow-up of the campaign against anti-personnel landmines with which I was involved at the Refugee Council. Because of course refugees, you know, landmines...you know, clearly these are all linked issues. So, I was involved in the campaign and we actually succeeded in the end. The British Government signed up, and 120 countries signed up, and that was a great success. And then...a small thing, well it wasn't a small thing. Through my work on the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly, ...we were, I was made aware of soldiers in the British Army who'd been shot at dawn for alleged cowardice, in 1914-18. And there was a campaign to give them pardons, and I was involved in that. In fact, I introduced a Private Members' Bill, and – and eventually they were pardoned. And about thirty or forty of them were from Ireland. And these were shot at dawn. It wasn't cowardice; the majority of them were, were traumatised, and just you know they were shell-shocked and so on. And what they needed was medical treatment and not to be shot. So. And the Irish politicians were campaigning for a pardon for them, so we got a pardon for all- several hundreds of these. So, I felt quite pleased that I played a part, part in that. At the moment, oh, gosh. I'm involved in lots, in even some very parochial

things. Small issues. But...I could list the whole lot but I think the Immigration Bill at the moment is, is, is, is quite a big one. And I'm also involved in- Oh, I've been involved in issues like road safety. I'm involved in a lot of things to do with Ireland. [half-laughs] And I could give you a long list of things...obviously you don't... 'Cause the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, I'm Chair of one of the committees, and we've done, we've done a lot of work which covers- the Committee has politicians from Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, Cardiff and London. And we've looked at issues like getting unemployment [benefit?], back to work. We've looked at travellers, Irish travellers and Roma. And one of the other issues I'm involved with very much is integrated education in Northern Ireland. And I was; I was a Chair of the All-Party Group on that, and I'm still involved. It's devolved now, but we still take an interest. And what we're really saying is that only seven or eight percent of children in Northern Ireland go to... integrated schools. Most of them are either Church of England – sorry – Church of Ireland Protestant or Catholic. And I think that causes harm in the communities. Children are so separate in, in Northern Ireland. And so, we're working hard to- most parents would like the choice, but most parents don't have the choice. So, I'm quite involved in that.

[0:57:36]

What drives you to do all these things, in your opinion? It takes a lot of energy, determination...

Well, I feel as long, as long as I've got the energy, and as long as I feel I'm making a contribution I'll go on doing it. The day when I think I'm no longer making a contribution or if I find it too hard work, then it, it, I'll stop. Because one's friends don't tell one "It's time you packed up." I like to feel that as long as I can, I can achieve a few things, that it's worth continuing. Cause other people don't do anything so you might as well get stuck in. You know, and after all it is enormously privileged being in Parliament, either in the Commons or in the Lords. I mean, the opportunities there are, the people, the people one meets, the events one can go to. You know, it's such a privilege.

How do you feel your mother would have thought about your being in the House of Lords?

Oh, I think she'd have been... She'd have found it mind-blowingly wonderful. Because she- yeah, I mean, she wanted, she was desperate that...that I would achieve something worthwhile. And I think she would have been- she'd have been absolutely delighted. And in fact, one of my regrets is that she never lived to see the day.

Yes.

You know. She'd really have liked that.

You survived the German occupation by coming to Britain. What do you feel that you have gained, and in what ways do you feel that you have given something back and contributed to British Society? I know that we have discussed a number of things. But what is your perception?

Well, I've gained an awful lot. Look... Britain has given me the most wonderful opportunities. And although I spend my time criticising Conservative British Governments, I think I've had enormous opportunities. And Britain is still a wonderful country. And I've been incredibly lucky. And I've had opportunities which one wouldn't have expected to get arriving, arriving as a little child – little refugee child in London, at the beginning, just before the war. I would never have expected to have such opportunities. So, you know, it's amazing, what's, the benefits I've had. What have I contributed? Well...hmm. Well, I like to feel... I like to feel I've contributed to public life. I like to feel, when I had a constituency, I helped a lot of individual constituencies. And sometimes I could actually help them really quite well and sometimes I couldn't do too much. I feel I've...I hope I've had an influence on, on, on Government policy. I've served on various Select Committees in the Commons and in the Lords. And I hope I've had an influence on the outcome of those ...Committee investigations. ...And I've worked hard in elections. I've canvassed in elections. I hope I've helped... my party to win, win elections or candidates to do well in elections. And I feel I've been involved in some charities. And I've- I hope I've given something to other people. I hope I've given a lot to other people. I've tried to. I hope I've succeeded in giving something.

[1:01:16]

I'm sure you have.

Well...

I'm sure you have. Reflecting on your many achievements, which stand out especially for you and give you most satisfaction?

I think contributing to the peace process in Northern Ireland probably gives me most satisfaction. But I think- I also feel that the work I've done on refugees and immigration has given me lots of satisfaction, yes. In Northern Ireland I, I was in charge of two departments; I could do things! [laughing] You know; I could make decisions. But I think, I think- I hope I have influenced Labour Governments for the better. And I hope I've taken a positive stand on human rights, on civil liberties and such issues. Yes. I've tried to.

I think you've succeeded to a great extent.

Well, you know, one can never do enough. You know, there are always things that need doing. There are always causes that, that need help. It's not so easy to...there's no end to it, because there are always people who need help. And then one can't do everything. One can't just, you know, do everything for all causes, because there aren't the opportunities. One has to concentrate on a few things. One has to say, "No, I can't do that." I mean, for example, my son's got Multiple Sclerosis, and I've been involved actively in working with the All Party Group on MS, and helping the MS Society. And I've done a lot of work on that... and generally on people with disabilities. Because you only have to push a wheelchair around the streets to know just how difficult it is. And once you've got a disabled person in your family you know just- you know far more about what the problems are. So, I think I've got some insight, insight into, into that. And I hope I am helping.

[1:03:17]

I think that your insight and your experiences and your humanity have done a great deal.

Well, look, I am what circumstances made me. Aren't I? If one has the sort of background I've had, it would have been awful if I hadn't devoted myself to some of the worthwhile

causes that there are. It would be a real cop-out if I'd just gone for money. I probably wouldn't have been good at that either. [laughs]

I think that's a very positive note on which to end unless there is something that you would like to add, some reflection?

Well, there is one little incident. My mother got naturalised – I'm sorry, I'm jumping about a bit. My mother got naturalised, and then when I was eighteen, was I 18 or 21, I got a letter from the Home Office saying, you know I was naturalised with her, but now that I was eighteen, I had the right to change my mind. And the letter said if I gave up, if I gave up British citizenship, I – I, I forfeit all the rights and privileges. But I no longer have all the duties and obligations. If I stayed British, I had duties and obligations. If I stayed then I would have the duties and obligations. And a little tear off slip which said, "I do/do not wish to give up my British Citizenship". And I thought, such a big decision and there's a tiny bit of paper that I had to send back to the Home Office. I thought it was almost surreal, you know, something that to me was so significant, and important, and had mattered all my life, could be, could be decided by "I do/do not wish to give up my British Citizenship". So, I thought that was quite amusing. I thought of that when I was working on the Nationality... Bill as well.

Indeed, because it is a big decision, and ...it's a question of identity, gained, lost; it encompasses many things.

Of course, it does. And the fact that- I should have mentioned that earlier but anyway, it's one of the little things that happened on the way. I think- I think I've probably- I've probably exhausted my life. [laughs]

And a very precious one. [brief interruption] Yes, I was about to ask, sorry. I was going to ask you. How, what do you yourself feel, or see yourself as, now, in terms of identity?

Oh...I think I see myself as British. Yeah, pretty largely British. But sometimes when I meet fellow refugees, I revert back to feeling a bit like them. And you know, when I was driving along Holeckova [a road] in Prague, where we used to live, you know, I did have more than a twinge. So, you know, I feel. I can feel quite emotional about that. But on my day-to-day

things I feel British. Maybe if I'd been a bit older, I wouldn't have felt – felt like that at the time I got here. But I think I feel- I feel, I feel British now.

[1:06:47]

You have, after all, lived here now most of your life.

I've lived here seventy-seven years! [laughs] And the first six, after all, I wasn't that, wasn't that conscious of such things in the first six. You know it was only when I was about five - four, five that I began to really be aware of things. So, very little of my conscious life was spent outside this country.

Do your children identify at all with what's now the Czech Republic?

Well, my daughter's very interested in all that. My son had got MS and he's got it quite badly so I wouldn't- I don't think he does. But my daughter's quite interested, yes. I mean. And Nicholas Winton's having a- there's a big memorial meeting in the Guildhall for Sir Nicholas Winton in May. My daughter... My wife and I got invited, and my daughter wanted to come. And I got her an invitation, 'cause she's met Nicholas Winton; you know, she feels that is part of her background. So, yes.

Good. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

No, just thank you for being patient with me – both of you. And, and for your interest in all this and, you know, thank you.

It's been a pleasure and a privilege. Thank you very much indeed for agreeing to be interviewed for AJR.

Thank you. Thank you for doing it.

[End of interview]

[1:08:10]