

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	RV234

Interviewee Surname:	Brunner
Forename:	Peter
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	5 September 1932
Interviewee POB:	Cluj, Romania

Date of Interview:	19 March 2019
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV234
NAME: Peter Brunner
DATE: 19th March 2019
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 19th of March 2019. We're conducting an interview with Mr. Peter Brunner. My name is Dr. Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in London.

What is your name, please?

Mr. Peter Brunner

And when were you born?

The 5th of September 1932.

And where were you born, please?

In Transylvania. The city was Cluj. [present day Romania]

Thank you, Peter, thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices Archive. Can you please tell us something about your family background?

Yes, of course. There's a lot to be said. In- in short, my great-grandfather came from a village which at the time was Polish, and the name was Oswiecim. Please remember this name, we'll come back to it. He was a sort of everything- plumber, a- he was a carpenter apparently. And as it was in those days, he was travelling- a travelling man. And he came down and ended up in Transylvania in a little village called Zsombor [present day Zimbor, Romania]. He then- he must have been a very nice man and worked his way up as a manager. The whole estate which is thousands and thousands of acres of land, wood, distillery, and animals. It's a wonderful place. And we are before the First World War. And the authorities of the Church, of the Catholic Church said, "Brunner, do you want to buy this estate?" And he said, "I can't buy it. I'm a- I'm a manager. I don't have any money like that." "Don't worry about the money. We will arrange the money." To cut it short, he was the owner of this estate. And the money which they put- which he put in, in those days, every day, the- the money was worth less and less and less because of- the inflation was going in hundred percent a day. And so he really was a lucky man. And so, he acquired this lovely estate, which- go on for many, many acres. And then, from then on, he had children and among them was my father. And that is my past. The Oswiecim is now called Auschwitz. And the story is that my family gone back to Auschwitz, but not to prosper, but to die. And this is the story really, of my family, in short.

[0:04:02]

So, this was your father's family?

Yes.

And what about your mother's family?

My mother's family, I know far- far less. I've only seen once my- her parents, which was a very great affair to come from Transylvania, Romania, to Hungary was- was fantastic on a train, I remember. And when my- when I saw my father- my mother's parents, there were two, small, old - and I began to cry. And that was one- I remember it as one day but we must have stayed more than a day. And he had a wholesaler in- in alcohol. That's what I remember. Not at all anything else. But I knew my mother's brother, who had a mill in- in Hungary. He- and that's about- I know my- from my mum's family.

And where did they live?

They lived in Kiskőrös, where my mother was born. It's also a village on the plain in Hungary.

And how did your parents meet?

Sorry?

How did your parents meet?

[0:05:45]

Oh, yes. My parents met under very lovely, interesting circumstances. My mother was working as a- not a milliner. In those days, the Brunner girls ordered lingerie from Budapest. And then one of them written to my father, would you please look into this and the other shop and we have quite a lot of lingerie that we made, would you please bring them home? So, my father said yes, because he was coming back from his studies in Germany. And- and you pass Budapest. So, the lady who put all the things to the Brunners together, was my mother. And they got talking, and they both were agnostics. This was a very large amount of people who did not think highly of God, or maybe they thought there isn't any. And they- they *rendezvous*-ed at meeting. I don't know when, but shortly, so father stayed in Budapest. And they went to- one thing led to another. And then they went to a very well-known eating place in Budapest. And they had a serviette. And that said they're going to have a boy called Peter. And now you're looking at him. Is not yet a boy- but is quite a different person. And they got married. She was taken- he was- sorry, first. She was- my father took her to Zsombor. And there were two kinds of opinion. One was- I don't know who and- but a half of the father's siblings were said- "why should you? Why'd you marry this lady? She's very nice. It's very beautiful. But- she's not- she comes from a different class of people." I don't think mum ever had this. This is a tale I heard. And that's how they met. And that's how they carried on all their lives.

[0:08:35]

And then your mother moves with your father to...?

Then- then she became pregnant, and I was born in Cluj, which is thirty kilometres- in my mind, then it was a fantastic journey by bus. Now, it will take about twenty or thirty minutes. It's thirty kilometres, I think it's around twenty-six miles, something like that.

From?

From Cluj.

So, Cluj to...?

Zsombor. It's- I remember those not terribly remember- I remember those days absolutely well. My family is totally- had enough of my story about Zsombor. But for me, it is a never-ending saga. If I come down now from to- from the top of St. Vincent's Lane, I see Zsombor in front of me. And the cows and the- and the animals. And it's- that's how I was made, really. And my childhood was, for me, legendary - heaven.

Tell us about it.

[0:10:08]

Well, the school finished on, say midday. My parents took me to the bus station- took us to the bus station. And that- there was some luggage. It was on top of the bus. And they told the bus conductor to- to- that we're going to Zsombor, because the bus stopped on a number of little villages. And for us it was the beginning of heaven. And then we- my auntie waited for us and took us to- it wasn't a castle. It was a large house. I don't know how many bedrooms there were: lots and lots of bedrooms. And my brother was different from me. He always arrange with Ilonka, which is a girl, cousin. And they went and they picked little animals, and they put them in their pockets or they had- collected flowers. But I was not like that. I went with my favourite- we had lots and lots of people working for us. Some worked for money. The majority worked at- we gave them, say, hundred acres, or fifty acres, and it's called "half and half". We- we had no reason to know what he did, what he grew, but half of it was him, and half of it was ours. And I joined and ploughing and whatever work there was, I was there.

And that was your gr- great-grandfather's est- that was the estate?

[0:12:12]

It's that was the estate. That was just it. Great-grandfather came down from Oswiecim and got, through luck, really. And one of my uncles stayed and managed it. And all the rest they went- my father went to Germany and he sent money over that the other one was an architect. I don't know where. He sent money - them. He sent money to- not only- not money, really. There were carts of things with bread, meat, also sorts of things which you have in a- in an estate like that. And Mihaly and I waited for the day and the hour to go. And we- we- we- we enjoyed ourselves.

Did you go every day there? Or just holidays?

No, we stayed! No. We stayed there for the summer holiday. Yes. Mum was there. Father worked in Cluj as- as a- as a Doctor of medicine first, and later, very- not long after that, as a psychiatrist. But all the- every weekend he came down to see the boys and that was even a better day and- for me, is an un-describable childhood. And I don't think anybody else can have a different one. We saw how dog- not- dogs, and how animals copulate and we had very good- father told us how things are in- in- in- he, he told us that we are no different from them in that respect. So, we had very good knowledge of it by being very young. And that was my childhood. Lovely, peaceful, gorgeous. Surrounded by the family, loved by the family. It was fantastic.

So, in Cluj, did you live in a flat, or what-?

In Cluj we lived in a flat. Yes. Well, very much like this, actually. It was also a community of a number of houses also funnily enough, owned by the- I think, the Roman Catholic Church? There were plenty of trees to climb, plenty of people to play with. It was okay.

And you said your father studied in Germany. Where? Do you know where he went?

[0:15:25]

Yes, he- I know he qualified in Würzburg. And I think, Berlin was- these two places I know he's been.

And he said he studied medicine and then became a psychoanalyst?

Yes.

So, do you know where- how did he get interested in psychoanalysis?

I think the Gnosis drove him that way. But I'm not sure. He- I can't- I can't say exactly. He must have met one of the- don't forget that Budapest was by now we are- this was in- in Cluj. But in Cluj he was a- a doctor. But when we went to Budapest, then he changed and been a psychia- a psychoanalyst. How he did, and why he did, I do not know. I was only a child.

Yes, yes. And you said your parents were both agnostic?

Yes.

So how did the- work in the house? How- did you know you were Jewish? Or that they were Jewish?

[0:16:52]

Oh, yes. Yes. I'm sorry. That was always the case, because Muska, who was one of my uncle and who, as I told you, was running Zsombor. He was- he was kosher. He ate only kosher. And in Zsombor we had place enough to erect- erect a shul. And he was a shul goer. But for me - I didn't see that at home. My father was never praying. He never *tallit* and *tzitsit* and *kapedli* [Hungarian word for yarmulke] and all this were- were unknown. He loved history, he loved philosophy. He loved medicine, and so do I. Religion did not enter, or God, not entered in our family, as such. Have I missed it? No. But instead there was a lot of love and respect. I must say that father, talked to us, that's Mihaly and us, twice in our life. The first one I already mentioned, that it was about procreation. We didn't remem- we didn't forget it. And the other one I remember very well, was that I asked my father, "How is it possible that submarines knows where they're going?" And he said, "Oh, that's alright. I'll tell you." And

he told us about the periscope. And that goes up. And at the end of it, they can see all the way around. To which I answered, “But Dad, all the way around, all they see is water. They still can't see how”- and then he told me about the compass. And these are where the two- discussion which he originated. There were of course others which come from- came from us. But all in all, this is what I got from him: philosophy, history and medicine. Now, mother is a different animal altogether, sorry, but - it “different” – wrong- genre. Today it's called “gender”. And she was: theatre, music and poems. Maybe in a different- poems, theatre and the third one. And I got both of them. Vera and I go to the- or, used to go to the theatre very often. Three times a month. Concerts we went to. But mainly, less concert than theatres. And then the beauty was that, we went to see the plays we like. I was very on to Shakespeare. And Vera loved Ibsen. And we ended up in a very short time loving both. And the one we liked we'll see again next year or later that year. And the beauty was not only the play, but the going home in the car and talking about, “Well, what did this play- what did this play tell you? Who do you think was right?” If there was a, that sort of a play. “What would you have done? Would you have murdered your son?” Or, “Would you have murdered your father? And then would you go and be your mother's husband?” You know what I'm meaning to. And this- this was beautiful. So, the play is not simply that we enjoyed it. It was that it became a subject. And we took- some- very often we didn't be- we have an opposite view. At least we had a view.

So, you say that's come from your mother, this interest in poetry and theatre – drama?

[0:21:56]

Poetry and theatre and drama and music came from my mum. And as I said, the rest from my dad.

But she wasn't- when he was in Cluj, was she working, or...?

No, she- she never worked to begin with because there was no need for her to work. She- her work was us. And she done very well. Well, I think she's done very well. I was never touched by my father. I mean, touched, I mean, beaten or slammed or- or my mother, nothing. Or we weren't punished that: you can't do this and you can't do that. That was not. And- and I did the same because I- I knew that what's going on here is that they're setting us an example.

This is the way your mother and your father live. And this is what we think they thought that we'll copy. And so, they gave example and so did I. And I think perhaps I overdid it, because I spent a lot of time with the children, but I wasn't at home a lot. I left when the children went to- well, when they went to school, I already left before. And when I came back from the surgery, they were asleep. So- but there were many occasion we did together and of course, all the holidays we did it all over the place in Europe and Hungary and Spain. And I did what I can. I- I- it's not for me to judge it. You have to ask them.

And what sort of friends did you have in Cluj? Do you remember any of your friends?

No.

Was it mostly with the family?

Yes. Yeah.

But you went to primary school in Cluj?

We went to?

In Cluj, to school? To primary school?

Yes. Yeah,

And what sort of school was it?

Well, I remember that it was actually- a fairly short time I spent in school in, in Cluj. But the first year was in Romanian. And that wasn't- I spoke Romanian but- but not every word I understood. Just in elementary. I don't think it was- there is- there wasn't known to have private school. I don't know. This certainly was not.

And what- what languages did you speak actually, at home? What languages?

At home?

Yeah.

Always Hungarian. Yes. Yes.

But the school was Romanian, and then Hungarian, or?

I remember the- the one in- in Romanian and I don't remember the ones in Hungarian.

Right. And was there any- did you ever, in that time in the 30s, did you ever encounter any anti-Semitism, or any problems?

[0:25:22]

No. I must say that- the cous- the uncle who stayed in Zombor, and when the time came, all the- all the village begged him: "Don't stay here. We will- we will make sure and some will take over. You will be with us, as peasants. And we will hid you." And Muska didn't do it. And they went to be killed - in then called Oswiecim. And we told them, "Come up to Bud- Come up to Budapest. It's- it's a much bigger place to- to be lost. Certainly, when you never been there, come and be with us." No, he will not leave Zombor. He couldn't believe. Who could believe that you are, you know, taken like dogs or cattle. And that's what they were.

So, when did you- when did the family decide then to move to Budapest?

Well- this- this is a difficult question because I- I wasn't very- I was a twelve, thirteen-year-old. Well, the answer is, I don't know. But I think it must have been- father went first. And he seen what the- what the- he- he bought, not bought but, he'd rented a flat for us. So, he went, I think one or two months earlier. And he- he's seen what jobs he can do. What are the - possibilities? And I don't- maybe Cluj wasn't big enough. Mind you, he was also the doctor of - there was a Hungarian theatre and a Romanian theatre. And the Hungarian theatre was- he was a doctor of. And I remember both of them going to certain shows and they took us to certain, which is- was for children. Because the director of the Hungarian theatre was the husband of Auntie- one of my aunties- a sister of my father. I don't know. Maybe they wanted more.

But did he move to Budapest for professional reasons, or was it at that time to- because the situation wasn't good?

[0:28:42]

Maybe they seen the situation coming, yes. I think.

Anyway, you don't know. You were young, so you didn't know. But do you remember your first impressions when you actually moved to Budapest? Did you want to go? Did you- what was it like?

Oh yes, yes. Yeah. Well, it's- the problem about Hungary is - and Budapest - is that both are beautiful. It's the people who are awful. But- I liked sport very much. I played water polo for the First Division team.

This is after the war?

Yes.

Yes. So, let's just stay throughout the earlier times.

The earlier times. So... I remember going to the theatre a lot. I remember queuing overnight to the opera, and graciously given a ticket behind a collar [column], so there was no visibility. Lots of theatre, lots of concerts, and swimming and water polo was my life. Father had two jobs. And at home he did psychoanalysis. Mother, also- I don't know what job- some- something to do with office. I think half a job in office. And-

But you said he had patients coming to the house?

Yes. And we were told not to have a loud- a voice or anything, not even the second room away. So, yes, that's how it was.

[0:30:47]

And you said you think he went- he was invited to Freud's birthday? That was before.

Father was.

Yes.

That- that was not from there.

No.

Many, many years earlier from- from Romania.

Tell us, what happened? So, he- he went to Vienna?

Well, all I know is that he went to his twentieth birthday celebration.

Twentieth?

Sorry, seven-seventieth birthday celebration. That's all I remember. But going from- it- it wasn't far. You know, Vienna- I remember them going- people gone from- in my father's age group, they went to Vienna, stay overnight, and came away. It's a very tiny distance.

But probably he didn't speak to you about his psychoanalysis, with the children?

No.

No.

Well, if you're interested, later I became- yes, later I was- I had a dreadful- I hated black places. And the problem was that we lived on the third floor. This is in Budapest. But the, the wood were under the- in the cellar. And I didn't like to go there at all. So, I always- I don't know why my brother wasn't asked. And so, I persuaded him to come with me. I- I- I was afraid. And I did- Father said, "Why don't you..." There was a lady whom I began to get- to

really like. To- “Why- would you like this? And I think he will help you with this.” And he took me to this lady, and we had- and she always- she had a way of dealing with children. And so, she said, “Well, let's just talk about things- what do you think? Tell me what you have been...” And this went on and on. And I don't know how- quite a while. And - this reminded me seventy years later, when Vera went to the home, and I switched the last lamp off. I hated it. And I was- I really felt back. It was like, like the cellar in Budapest. And in every house, I mean, we- I never hear anything here. You never heard anything here. But somehow, maybe outside, if I heard the- a little noise, I had to get up, have a look where everybody is. But it's- it's pitch dark everywhere. That was my first one – analysis.

But when- how old were you then? The first...?

[0:34:02]

The first time - thirteen, fourteen? The second time was that I, when I came to London, I went to Senate House and they were very nice to me. And I had nineteen pounds a month to live on, and eat and that sort of- and I told them that I would like to have- because I, at that time, I wanted to be a psych- psychoanalyst. So, I said, “Can I go to learn psychoan-?” You won't believe it, that they did! And I went to see one in- it was St. Bartholomew's Hospital. And then there- I went to Chelsea to this lady every day. And I think it then was- could it be four guineas? I didn't pay it. did the university paid it, because that was very rare that I got my *Stipendium* [scholarship] like everybody else, plus, I was paid for her. And I remember that when I really got better, I spoke about my parents like I'm speaking to you. And she said, “Look here, Peter, tell me, you told me what you thought about your parents. Are you telling me that there was never, ever any problem between you and your parents? Or between you and your brother?” I said “No. Between my par...” And she got very angry. I think she had enough of this. And I said “No, but I had lots of problem with my brother whom I think it was just an Oedipus complex.” Because I had- I was alone. I was the only loving Petrushka. And all of a sudden, this guy comes along and now it's Michenka is in. But to be honest, I always admired him because he always was much better than I am. Not that you- you've- I failed and he passed. We all passed always, but he passed much better. And in Sweden, he- he was very well known later. You know, you know AGA, it's a huge company doing with gases. And there was an AGA - you remember the AGA ... which every, or a lot of kitchens had AGA cookers. And he got up to that, on the board of AGA. Then he wrote books. Then

he had ideas. What was it called when- and you have to have a patent, yes. He had a number of patents. But when you work for that company, it's not your patent, it's the company's patent and you got- you get nothing. And so, he- he made a very high level. I was just one GP out of 23,000 GPs at the time.

[0:37:49]

And there was a- this is now going back- an earlier when- when I started here. And I failed my first MBE appoint- because nobody told me that you can take it every three months. And nobody told me that, "Don't do it. Because if you fail, you're not going to- can you not go further." So, when I heard all this, and I failed the one, I didn't fail because I didn't know what the questions were. There were five questions. No, sorry. Five questions - three times five. Above it: "We want you to answer one of each." But I didn't see that, or if I seed it, I didn't know it. So, I saw that you have fifteen questions to ask. I mean, it shows a little bit of stupid-ness, but I was so excited. And of course, I think I finished five question from the first one. So, I remember the second time I went, and that was it. And I thought, "What am I going to do?" And believe it or not, I would have gone to be a taxi driver. And so, I really was going with a bit of a- I was afraid. And we had three, three hours morning writing, and three hours afternoon. And in the meantime, and this was in- in a square. As I go each time to the National Theatre, I pass it. There was a-

Russell Square?

[0:39:58]

That's right, opposite Russell Square, as you go down to the theatre, there's a park. And this- there was a one and a half hour between the two lots. And then they said, "Oh! Did you- what did you write about? You remember the kidney?" "Yes." I said, "I do remember the kidneys." "Yes. And what did you say?" And I told them what I wrote. And they told me what they wrote. And I said, "My God! It wasn't- it was just different. It wasn't bad. I don't..." And do you know - that was now fifty years ago - every time- yesterday when I went to a concert last night, every time I passed that and if there is a- a- you- you can't go further very quickly, I know my blood pressure gone up. I know my pulse is beating. And I remember this awful time when I had- different thing about the kidney.

But you passed it?

Yes.

OK. We'll come back to it a bit later. Because now we're still in, in the 40s somewhere, to your time when you moved back to Budapest.

Yes.

So, when you moved back to Budapest, were there any restrictions already in place on the Jews? Or was it all- you were still free?

No, yes. No, I didn't find anything. I didn't find anything as- as a child. The question is, or the question you raise is, is very well known. That part of Europe you don't have to ask whether they were or not. They were sucked by- if mother gave them milk, they gave them with it, anti-Semitism. I mean, it was obvious. It was- going, going back to what I heard, I didn't notice it. I went to school. I went to the- to- to- to- before, well, that's beside the point. I didn't notice, no. But not so much in- well, Hungary as well. Czech- the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Polish, they all, all anti-Semitic.

So, when you came to Budapest, did you go to school immediately? Or not?

[0:42:52]

Yes!

Yes.

Yes.

So which school? Where did you go to?

Árpád Gimnázium. Now, that's interesting. I haven't spoken about that to you. And that was a lovely, lovely place. And as you probably know, around Hungary was really the most Easternly the outpost of the Roman Empire. So next to the building, we had an amphitheatre built by the Romans, where we played football. So, it was a very nice- I remember the teachers and- what- something I wanted to say, which escapes me. And that's where I went. Árpád Gimnázium. Oh, yes. And then- we are now after the war, aren't we?

No, so I wanted to still be before the war. So, in fact, you went to the Gimnázium after the war?

Yes.

Yes. So, when you came to Budapest, from Cluj-

Yes.

Did you go to any other school? Before the Gimnázium?

No. No, no.

No. So-

And the problem was that... No- tell me- I am-

Where in the chronology? I want to get to the time in 1944 when the- when the Germans came. How do you- how do you remember the change in Budapest as a child when you were there?

Well, the first thing was the Arrow Cross. The hugely, obviously- killing Jews was the utmost you can do for humanity.

Those were the Hungarian...?

Yes. Yes.

Tell us what the Arrow Cross was.

Absolutely the- right-er than everything. And since then, it's the same.

So, what did they do? Did you have any personal contact? No.

No, no. No.

But you saw them. One could see them.

You saw them. And you hear them. Yes. And then, I am also- I don't know, I think, are we before the war or after the war-

No, in- we're still in that- so, I want to get to 1944 when you had to- when restrictions came into place. How do you remember that time?

[0:45:30]

I remember that time as- [pause] On my parents' part, a very down- they very quickly came home. They never gone out, whether there was a- whether this was told not to, that you can't go out. But they had fear. They weren't so... full of- full of possibilities, full of love. And they just went- one day after another.

Or more worried?

Worried.

So, you picked that up as a child?

Yes. I picked up... something is wrong. There is a good word in Hungary, in Hungarian, a pressure that something which intruded into our family. Something which never had happened before. The whole atmosphere has gone. Yes, in that sort of secondary way.

And then how did it affect where you lived? You lived where, in Budapest?

We lived in Buda, overlooking the Danube and- and the Margaret Island and Margaret bridge. It was a flat on the third floor, I think.

But could you stay there? What happened?

Yes, yes. No, first we went to- yes, you're right. First, we didn't live there. First, we- but that was afterwards. No. First we live in- in- in Pest, Klotild utca. And then we moved for some reason to this, which was very- bigger, older, but nicer look-out to a square, to the Danube to the island and to the bridge.

But this is when? When?

Very early on. Very early on.

Right. So, before the war. Right.

Yes. Yeah. And my day was: six o'clock, get up. Seven o'clock in the island - Margaret Ireland - there was a- lots of things. Tennis courts. And there was a, a pool - outside and inside pool. You have to- I told you that I was playing water polo. Seven o'clock, an hour of trainings, first swimming a kilometre and then with the ball. And then get dressed, then go to university and lunch was- diverse places which did nothing but milk and- and bread. So, we went to that - milk and bread. And then the second place, that was the- go to either surgery or gynaecology or a lecture room. And then I went home and I was very, very hungry. And I went to - what is it called? Next to the kitchen was where you kept home-made this and everything else. So, I went in there, whatever it was, I gobbled it in. And then I went to the theatre, or queuing for the theatre, or go to the opera, or going to the- queuing up for a bad seat. And that was my life.

But this is – again - this is after the war.

[0:49:32]

After that war.

So, we- I just want you to tell me a little bit about 1944. And that- you had to move to a Jewish house, you were telling me before.

Yes.

So, what-?

Oh, you want me to tell you what happened there?

Yes, please. Yes.

Okay. Yes. From Klotild utca we went to Szemere utca. I say this because people who will see this, or hear this, they will know what I'm talking about.

Okay.

And the Szemere utca is, which I will describe you, one night- sorry. Yes. One evening, the doorbell. And it was unexpected. It wasn't- by then we were- we had Star of David. So you had to be at home.

So, you were wearing Yellow Stars?

Yes. I've got it here.

You've got the star with you.

Yes. I've got it here. The Star and I've got it here. Here. And since blood goes all over, I got it all over. And two SS officers, very, very nicely dressed officers, was- on- on the doorway. And my father and my mother were- I remember for once my father said, "Leave it to me." – he said to mum, because his German was better than my mum. And they said, "Could you- we are here to give you this letter." And he opened the letter. And he, he was quite sure that the letter came from one of his sisters, Dora, or to us Doriska. And the letter said, "Give over

the children to these people, and they will take them to a Swiss- Swiss house.” I don't know what the expression is- not- the house wasn't in Hungary. It was a territory of Sweden- of Switzerland. *Védett ház* [protected house]. Yeah.

[0:52:12]

A Schutzhaus was it?

What?

A Schutzhaus.

Yes. Yes. And- and they left us. And I never heard, until the war was over. Father came maybe a month later, home. Mother- and we- and that was the first home. And then a few weeks later, the front- this is in Buda. So, the front was coming from the east, the Russians. And the other side was the Germans. But this always went like this, and so we had to change houses at night. And when we were run at night: [makes sound of rapid gunfire] You know, that's what you heard. And- and I saw German soldiers on their tummy and- and- and killing other people but in the pitch dark. I don't know. It was awful. And then we arrived to another house. And this went over four times.

So, for quite a long time?

Yes.

But tell me. When this SS officer showed up, what did the- How did your parents react to this that they- you should go with them?

Yes, I remember how they reacted. They certainly got white. They certainly couldn't believe it. They wanted to- I think- I don't remember we inviting them, but I think they have and wanted to close the door. It didn't look well if somebody went out and saw that these Jews are making some business with these two people.

I mean, mother, as she was, she was hysterical, and crying and - terrible. Father was never such a person. He was erect, and quiet and said his pieces. And asked them, "Could you tell me what Dora?" "No." "Could you tell me what the lady you got this letter from- could you describe it to me?" And they did. "She was not tall and rather corpulent." "And in what language did you talk?" "Well, we talked German." But of course, they- every middle-class Jew in that part of the world spoke German, Austria because the Austro-Hungarian Empire that was the second language - not Romanian, but German. So, the description he gave, one of them. I can't remember whether they had more *Hakenkreuze* [swastikas] or not. But one was the one who was superior. And the description he gave - was Dora. And so reluctantly mother- I don't- I remember it. Mother was crying and put this in a bag of some sort.

[0:56:10]

And there and then, they took you?

Yep - yeah. And I've seen mother, say, a month later. Who came as- one evening. And he said [s]he's going to be with us, but we mustn't know during the day. Whether you come into the kitchen or I leave the kitchen, you don't treat me, you don't see me, you don't talk to me. Which is not difficult, which is difficult at- at- people in puberty. Especially boys. And it was- she knew, she told us each night she will come and talk to us, which she did.

So, who were the other people in this? Was it? Were there other? Was it like an orphanage or was it?

Yes, that sort of thing. Yes. I didn't- didn't remember many. I remember one boy, who was there with, I think mum, and wasn't Jewish at all. This wasn't a Jewish thing. This was all sorts of things. And they were French. And I still remember it. All the time, this boy was making havoc, and mother said - what did she say?- Koloson was his name. "Shut up," - in English - "Shut up, Koloson" - 15,000 times a day. Oh, "*Ne touche pas, Koloson.*" - Or don't touch or something. I don't know what it means. I think "*Ne touche pas, Koloson.*" was 200 times a day. And that was- that was difficult with Mum.

And was there enough food? What do you remember?

[0:58:14]

Yes.

That- was that-?

Yes, enough food. Yes. How it- I don't know how it got. Oh, yeah, Mum was-

You were there during the siege of Budapest? You stayed there?

In Buda?

Yes.

Yes, yes. Yes.

So, there were- there was a food shortage, but you didn't- you had enough food?

I don't remember- yes - I don't remember not having enough food.

And your mother came there, how? She was taken from- what happened after you left? What happened to your parents?

Well, father was- apparently in- was rounded up. And they took him to a brick factory. Every- Jews- males, females, I don't know. Children, I don't know. And as- as- as it's known, he went to Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen and Theresienstadt, and survived. My cousins: one survived.

So, of his family-

Sorry?

Of your father's family?

Wiped out.

[0:59:32]

So, the uncle who- who had- the estate?

Zsombor – yes.

But the-

The uncle didn't have the estate. They all-

Yes.

All of them were on the books.

But what about the aunt? The aunt survived- the aunt...?

Sorry, which aunt?

The aunt in Bucharest?

Dora, yes.

Did she survive?

Yes. And Rozalka survived. Oh, that's another story. They became a very, very *frum* Catholics – no, Protestant- Protestant. And he became, Rozalka's husband became, what you call a- higher than a priest?

A bishop?

Something like that. Yes. As a Jew.

In which country?

[1:00:34]

This is in Budapest.

In Budapest.

Yes. We called her Yimmi. I don't know, which- should have been 'Jimmy' or 'Yi- me', but that wasn't his name, but that's what we called him - or everybody else called him. And Anna, the daughter, is my only cousin in Budapest, whom I speak to - not weekly. Say, once in a fortnight or something like that. And whom Mihaly and I- and I send money because you can't live on a- on a pension in Hungary. And [s]he is three years older than me, so she's 89. And I can't get her here. She was here before. Now I can't get her. I said, "I'll go and drive you back." "No." I said, "All right, I'll send you a- a, a ticket. You come. It's two- two-and-a-half hours, Anna. You're sitting, and I will buy you a very good seat. It's the same as we go to [inaudible], to Spain, to Malaga." "No." I appreciate it. She's elderly. She has problem with eyes.

So, she was one of the few survivors. So, from your father's family- so you- how many people? The cousins, they all were- and they all were deported to Auschwitz?

[1:02:18]

I know only one- do you want to hear a story where? The- one of my father's brother was tall, good looking, absolutely beautiful. Always white this, and a hat and- here and here. And he married a- another lady who was twice as big as Dora, but was very rich. They called Jozepovits, the family. In this part of the world, or rather, around Cluj, the Brunners were known and- but the Jozepovits were way above the Brunners. Alright? So, he had- he was very, very *frum*. When he came to us, he also had - or got - by marrying a Jozepovits girl, another estate, but not in Zsombor, somewhere else. But they all came to Cluj to buy- I don't know, all sorts of things you need to- to have an estate: ploughs and all sorts of - what they needed. He always came in the following way: In his left hand he had a duck, a- a breast of a duck - fumigate. How'd you call it?

[1:04:00]

Smoked?

Smoked breast of duck like this. And my mother said, “Jóska, come and sit down.” Joseph, I think – “Come and sit down.” “Sit down? No, I’m sorry.” He stood in this hand he had bread like this and a knife. [Peter shows actions of his uncle preparing the duck] Like this. This, this, this. He had- and he had wanted the son to say the – not the- *kiddush*. Guess what he had? Four daughters. Four daughters. Marianne, Leah, Judit, Eszter. And they were all liberated. They were all in- in- I don’t know, doesn’t matter. Could have been Auschwitz or anywhere else. Jóska and- and Jozepovits died. And the four girls came home. They were delib- liberated by the Russians. They came home, and then were billeted into a school, I think, high up- second or third floor. We’re talking about – I’ll tell you another story. You’re going to- you’re going to- no, perhaps I shouldn’t- said it. There was fire, broke up in this school. And Judit said, “Jump!” We are in December. “Jump!” “No, they are not jumping, they are going down.” To cut a long story short, Judit jumped. And she ended up thank God, on a peel- pile of snow in her underwear – dress. Minus God-knows-what degrees. This brings me another thing which I want to tell you, and which I will also don’t remember - not remember.

[1:06:33]

When- Judit was- Oh, I know exactly where Judit was. In Birkenau. First in Auschwitz. Have you been there? Well, you know it’s a small- few- few miles. In Birkenau. And every day, at two o’clock, there was a call. It’s- now you have to know that- well, I’m sure you know, Birkenau is very, very straight. There is nothing there. The winds blow. And also, it was- I’m not sure the- what you call when you are sinking. And you had to stand there at two o’clock in your underwear. And I didn’t do the same, because that’s silly, but I knew which was her- her allotted place. And I stood there for quite a long time, just thinking, to, to get it away. But you see, you can’t take it away. Just- I was very well dressed. Vera was there.

You went to Auschwitz? Birkenau?

Yes, yes. This is in- yeah, that's right. And so Judit's still alive. She's in- is in Tel Aviv... and very, very happy - grandchildren. With her I talk quite a bit. We've been many times.

And the other - girls. They survived that fire?

No.

No?

They died.

The other three died?

The other three - sorry. Yes.

You didn't say. So, she was the only survivor-?

Of the four child- of the four girls.

And this is after they survived?

[1:08:31]

Exactly. The father tells me- if you don't know the stories, when the Russian came, right? Put it the other way around. When your diet is three times a day water in which, maybe, maybe if you're lucky, there was something in the water. All right? Certainly not food, certainly not calories. All right? Now, your gut and everything else, is shrinking. Thinning. And many- tens of thousands of Jews died - because there was plenty to eat. And they died. They couldn't get through. And my father said, "Stop, don't do this." "Why not? It's for- at last we have some food!" He said, "Yes, precisely because you didn't have food. Don't do this." And many died. But I mean, this is obviously terrible thing that- Leah was the oldest one - why they couldn't say- if- if- if you have death or- or, or jump, I would think one jumps.

[1:10:08]

Yeah. But just coming back to you. So, your mother then joined you in this- in this Swiss house and you moved from one place to the other. And do you remember the- there was a siege of Budapest? I mean, the bombing and-

Oh God-

So, tell us. What do you remember of that?

Alright. I don't know if you can see it, if you can do this but- you are in a cellar. Alright? With your mum. Without mum, certainly without father. And you see the following- wheem, whim, whim, whim, whum, whum, WHUM, WHUM. That means- that was what they- the Germans did, bombing. And they all. And it was always, I remember getting my mother's hand, and after each one was coming, because the next one will be you. And it wasn't us.

But your mother was with you?

On this occasion I remember my mother was with me. It means that it was before the housing and the Jewish house. I remember this incident, number- I know where it was. It's all coming back now. There is a story of one particular person, whose name escapes me, who did business with the Engl- with the Germans. And he had to give a lot of - you know the story?

Go on.

A lot of cars, or rather what you call- cars which- which carry things. Not cars, saloon cars. And for each one, I don't know the story surely because he was killed actually in- in Israel. But anyway, he had this deal with the Russians, and we went to a camp. Apparently, we were on it, it was money put down and then we were in the camp to go to Switzerland, organised by this Jew. And we didn't. Because either we didn't pay enough money, or it was not- there were too many people wanted to do this.

This was Kasztner?

[1:13:07]

That's it. Thank you.

Yeah. So, you were supposed to be on that Kasztner train?

It was- absolutely, yes.

It never worked. But you were not?

No. I think - I don't know, but - I think also Dóra must have been the person who paid for this. That- we lived always very nicely, but that never- we never had bank accounts or money. But, you know, very nicely.

And did you know at the time where your father was, while you were with your mother there?

No idea - no idea. After the war, if you interested, there were three of us. And I thought that it's up me to do something, because we had to eat. So, I don't know from where, I had four wheels, wooden wheels, and a platform and something to pull it. And I got one of those. And I advertised it that I can do people if they want to take something which they don't have any more because the house got bombed down, and they want to move what they have, somewhere else. And I got some money for this. And then we left Budapest and went back to Cluj. And that's where father came. So, I am guessing that between the end of the war and him coming took months. And I know why. Because this is- he never ever told me, or Mihaly or mum anything about what happened to him. Only Rozsa. You know, where I- where he, sort of turned to the wall.

His sister? His sister, Rozsa?

His sister, yes. So, I- and I heard this and I'm sure it's right. He did not leave the patients. By patients, you mean the whole *Megillah!* They all were patients. They all were skin and bones. And he never, ever wanted to leave them. And he was working with, by now I think, the English contingents arrived. Anyway, there was food. It was not a problem. And he didn't leave the- those who could still- I mean, he saw, say, seventy people dead a day. But there were a lot to be said- a lot to be done. And he never left his- his role as a doctor.

[1:16:26]

But he went, I guess, on the deathmatch from Auschwitz to Belsen, or he was deported- you said Auschwitz-

Auschwitz, Birkenau-

Birkenau.

And Bergen-Belsen.

Yes. And so he was liberated, where?

I don't know. But I don't care. I don't want to know. One is as bad as the other. I don't know.

But when he came back, do you know roughly when he came back to Cluj?

Yes, we came back to- to Cluj.

In the summer, or...?

Yes, yes, I think June maybe. And I looked at him. And I've seen this face before. This is a face I know. But it wasn't his face I remembered. He was half of himself in- I think, it was a jacket on him for somewhere. And, instead of here, this was here. And [pause] there's nothing to say is there? And that's it. And from then on, as I told you, after a while, he began to eat. Of course, after a good while he looked as he did, but he wasn't the person who left. In many, many ways.

[1:18:24]

He was a sort of person before that we had- I never seen my parents go to a restaurant in my life. The most I've seen is, they went to the Margaret Bridge, Margaret Island, and they had an espresso. That was the maximum I ever seen them doing. So, he- slowly he was what he

used to be, but he used to be a person when we have a *jól* [good- treat?] it's called, a sort of like here you would go for tea. And everybody was speaking, but not my father. And a very rare occasion when he began to speak, "Be quiet. Can't you hear Mandi is speaking?" And everybody was waiting that he will say something interesting and- and he did. But it- and that was it. That day- he never spoke to us or-

So, he was-

And we were- all wanted. And when he did, it was so pleasant- spoke about all sorts of things, about Einstein and... anything- anything.

But not about his experience in Auschwitz?

Never. Never even a word. Not a sentence. Not a word.

But you said before that when he came back, he locked himself into a room?

Yes. No, the only person, as I told you, he spoke – was Rozsa. Nobody else.

So, she came to your house?

[1:20:20]

Every day. It took her about two or three weeks. Every day. I never been in the room. I know when the room was open, I know he was lying to the wall. I don't know. I think Rózsa fed him or Rózsa took- or mum did the cooking and Rózsa took- took it to him. I don't know, I guess.

So, they nursed him back?

They nursed him back. Yes.

And then did he continue to practice as a psychotherapist?

Psychoanalysis?

Psychoanalysis.

Yes, yeah. Yeah. In- in Budapest he had two jobs. One job was a national health job. And the other one was private.

So after how long did you then move back to Budapest, from Cluj?

You're asking me very-

Well, let's say half a year, or a year or?

No, no, no. Much earlier. Few months. As I told you, he went as far- when he, sort of could- could stay, and stand, and walk, and talk, I take- it was two months. And then he went to- to Budapest. And then he bought this - not bought - hired this flat on the-

Right. So that was all after the war. That's what- when your life started again?

Yes.

[sound break]

[1:22:04]

Yes, so we managed to get to after the war, when you said your father then went to Budapest to rent a flat.

To, to, to- yes, yes, yes. And then the three of us followed. And we got to a school. We got into Arpad Gimnázium. [asking about recording] Is it ready?

Yeah, it's ready.

Oh, I see. Arpad Gimnázium. And- at certain point, you have to at the time, had to say, do you want to go to classical or do you want to stay in physics, and that sort of thing. I went to, to the physics and chemistry, and that sort of thing, because that's what you needed for going to university on medical school. Well, being life what it was, wasn't that much better. Because we had the- it wasn't as bad as the Arrow, Arrow [Cross] people, but it was all one-party system - no democracy. And I was thinking of going to the University in Budapest. And my- I matriculated. Very well. And then the university says that unfortunately, they don't have room for me. What you have to know is, it's- we are in a completely different society. It- it was really, tyranny, if you like.

[1:24:08]

So, the population was spread like this: agricultural, labourer and what they call *egyéb* [other]. That's a very important word. That means you either a peas- peasant, or you're working with your hands or in a, in a company or you are something else. So, you are not what we want you to be, in order to get in. All the peasant category gets in. All the working class, of course, get in. But there was no time for- no place for me, because I was neither. Alright? So, the Arpad *Gimnázium* which I was, at the time, knew that there are people going to Moscow to medical schools and various other studies. So, I had no choice. And I- because the matriculation they said- the- I chose, it's better to be a doctor in Moscow than not be a doctor at all. So, there, there it was. And we arrived to Buda, to a very nice, well-known school. And we waited. And their people were coming and they took measurements for a coat, and they usually – the Russian hat. And all that was all right. And one day, they just said, “You, you, you, you, you and you - you're not going.” And that was because the Russian university said that they don't have spaces for- for- only for a certain amount of people and there were too many on the list. So, this was the most fantastic news I had. Because- because they didn't get me into normally in Budapest. Now I can't get to- I was allowed in to Budapest. So, they, after all, they got me a place.

[1:27:04]

And why did you want to study medicine?

Why does one study mechanics? Building? Architect? Like you, theatre? I can't answer that. That- there was my father. And I decided very off- very early. I- I was very good at physics. I was in the- in- in my group, in my- was by far the best one. Me- numbers, I was very- not good at. I never understood - I don't know what it is in English - when you have two lots of- "Two x equals three y. What is y?" So, I said who the hell wants to know what y is? I didn't understand it. I didn't get it. And this went on and on of course, this is a normal one. But there are two unknowns. You know, I got lost. I- I- it wasn't for me. So, mathematics was out, and everything else you do - every- a builder or a whatever - you got to know numbers and percentages. And that's what they- always left me dry. And I- I loved medicine. I loved anatomy and everything. And my favourite is the kidney, because that's very interesting. And everything else, I- I just adored it. And so, I got into university. And in this gathering who was going to Moscow, I met my first girlfriend. Her name is Rózika. And she was- she's coming from a peasant family. It doesn't mean they're peasants, but I mean, they're agricultural, if you like. She had seven childr- she had seven siblings and they slept in one room in- in a godforsaken place. And- and she has lovely. Very petite. Never been to an opera house, and I took her and she really loved it. But it was not- she- she left anyway to go to Moscow. So, it was a very... small affair.

[1:30:10]

And that- that's when, for me, was a good time coming. I wasn't necessary- I wasn't involved in being a Communist. I wasn't involved in certain activities. You had to belong to the *Young* - I forgot what it was. A movement. A young polit- young- I don't know. But you had to belong without any- so I belonged. And I enjoyed- I enjoyed the university. I was silly, really. And I wanted to be a paediatrician. And we had really different from here. We had only word to word. You didn't write anything. And so, I really thought I know the- when it came to paediatrics. And I was told that, "What is the incubation period of measles?" And I said without thinking, "Five days." "No, I'm sorry to tell you it's not five days but I'll conserve- you certainly pass. All the rest I asked was perfectly right. But I give you not one, but two." And I said, "Sir. Could you please fail me?" And he says, "You are mad?" "No, no, Sir. I like paediatric to be the same as the others. I want the number one pass mark." It's not- it was one to seven, one being the best one. So, he said, "Well, I don't quite see what you mean." "Well, that's what I like. And I'm coming back if I may, in September." This was in the beginning of the summer season. "Well," he said "all right, if that's what you want. I don't

agree with you. But I did- couldn't give you absolutely the top decision because you- you didn't get the right number. See- see you- see you in September.” So, I went in September. I really nicely dressed. And in I- he is a professor of the faculty. So, I said, “Hello, Sir. Yes, Sir.” “All right, can I go ahead?” the professor said. I said, “Certainly, Sir.” He said, “What's the incubation period of the measles?” “Seven days, Sir.” Well, there you are. So, he gave me number one. I lived as I taught- as, as I said to you. Got up at six, seven o'clock in swimming pool in Margaret Island, getting- doing physical swimming, then I go to the university at eight. Then I went- no, not to eight, to six. And I went home. I ate ferociously because I was very- I only had a little milk and a bun with it- then lunchtime. And then I rushed back. All this is not on a car, not on a bicycle, it's on public transport, which- it was not perfect. And I went either to the theatre or a concert, or I went out all night to- for a next day opera ticket. And that- and- and I had friends, and we- there was nothing- not- not like here. Our children are really, really over- over- what they can do, and what they- we had Russian films. Mainly- no, the theatre was also mainly from Russia. Concerts were all right. So that- that's it. There was nothing like- there was no other choice. But the- but we did also, within friends, a book. And each week we met and read the book. And all of us have to say what was in the book they liked. So, it's a sort of really, a book circle. I had friends.

[1:35:19]

So, was it a positive period in your life?

A very positive period in my life. Not so positive to my parents. Unfortunately, Jews came up in the- in, in, in the Parliament, and mainly in- in various serious places. I don't know if you heard of Rákosi Mátyás, and- these people were, if you like, brainwashed in Moscow for ten, fifteen years. They were Communist and they were- Labour, if you like. But there was no choice. You either were accepting the Communist regime and then you can go up.

Yes.

But I wasn't interested in that. I wasn't, at the time, politically minded. Nor could you be.

Yeah.

Your political- can you imagine every single... general, what you call when you- general- when you vote- general voting, 99.9% was to the Communist Party. And, guess what? The other percent were- which were also Communist, but not well done. So, that's what they wanted to say, hundred percent. And then if not, they knew who you are. There was a - police. And that's not the police on the street. It's the police of the Communist Party. And many people disappeared. Many people died without ever being- I mean, it was terrible. For me, I was a young guy, a young guy, friends, no girlfriends. Sport. Doing it, watching it.

What about your father? How did it impact on him?

[1:37:38]

Father, I would say, lie low. I think- I think I'm right. Both of them were part- conservative- sorry- in the Communist Party. But that was- it's- it's like a password. Pass- password. You got to show it. Without being a member of the Communist Party it- you got nowhere. And I think Dad had, as I told you, two jobs. And he couldn't have had any jobs unless you are a member of the Communist Party. Because if you don't, and there is somebody who is, and you both going to the same job you won't have it. That's how I understood it. I was also party to this Young Communist Party. No- no, it's not a party. You- once you were in school, that's what you-

Youth movement?

Youth movement. Yes. So, for me, yes, it was a lovely- lovely time, really. But I wasn't aware quite exactly what is going on. And then slowly came the Revolution. And that was very, very- fantastic. Fantastic. And there was a meeting, which was called by a non-Communist organisation, and I went to listen to that. And I knew that one or two days now, from now, there will be big trouble. And of course, it was big trouble. It was terrible trouble. I wasn't a doctor, as you know. I- I remember so clearly. On the Danube there were steps. And it was very common to sit on a step. Either you sit with a woman, or you sit by yourself. And I did by myself and a book. And I was doing my- I was just a few days away from my last exam - medicine. And I saw the march- a march going at- I don't want to tell you exactly. And then I put the book down, went home, got dressed properly, went to this march, and that was on the Parliament Square, in front of Parliament. And it was a- a fresh air. There was

people who said, "We can't tolerate all this." And then the rest is of course known. And the Russians came in, on the street, with tanks and they- some didn't know where they are, some took away your watch - I mean, the, the soldiers. A lot of people died. I was away from home for three days and nights. I was there- when all this happened, I was near a hospital, which happened to be near the radio- the broadcast house. And that was very much attacked. And as a non-doctor, I could see people coming in without legs, without arms, dead, you name it. They were all there. And I- I was there for three days and nights.

In the hospital?

[1:41:49]

In the hospital. I think I told my parents where I am. I'm not so sure. And then it was clear to me, that this will be a pogrom here, because all this was priorly Communists, and led by Jews - I thought. And I decided I'll go. And I told my parents. I told my brother. My brother said he's not coming. He was a slow person. And there was Heidi, a beautiful, absolutely beautiful girl. He was in the provinces where the university was in metallurgy. And so was Heidi. And he fancied her but could not say anything. So, Heidi also had- liked Mihaly, and she didn't say a word. And later she told that, that- she expected Mihaly to say it, as rule. And so, Heidi got fed up with this, married another one from the school- from the staff- from the- somebody who was in the same place. And Mihaly said, no, he is now going back for Heidi. But there were no trains, or if there were, one a day and took hours and hours. And this is what he did. And very much like- I'll tell you another thing. Very much like he said, "Heidi, shall we go together?" And Heidi said, [softly] "Yes." And so, they got- Heidi got divorced, and Mihaly and Heidi got married in Vienna. And that- I have got a picture somewhere. They're sitting like this- Mihaly is sitting like this, with a terrible hat and Heidi is sitting here by this. It's not a picture you would want to see: "We just got married." It looks like you're waiting for- for an inquisition. But they had- and they went to- to Sweden. And Mihaly finished the metallurgy studies and Heidi as well. And they done very well. Both of them worked for the same- no, Mihaly worked for the large- I told you about AGA. Heidi on the other word, worked for one- Sweden is full of making steel, mainly stainless steel. And that's why they're now in much trouble, because steel is gone out. It's all plastic, or some variety of steel which they don't have. And Mihaly and Heidi- there was an office which there were many, many mines, and many people- many companies who made steel. And there she got on to, to be the

top person of- I think, nowadays you call it- who is the one who hires and fires people? To do that job, she was very good. And they both of them earned very well. And they then had a daughter, Lottie, who is now - everybody's a doctor in our family - who is now responsible for lower half of Sweden's mental problems. It's very high NHS place. She goes to conferences in Sweden, in here, in America. And they have a boy who lives in Texas with his wife very nicely. And Lottie is in Kalmar, southern Sweden. And [s]he has a boy and a girl. And that's about it.

[1:46:44]

So, they left, but did you leave before them? Who left first – Hungary?

I did. Mihaly, as I said, went- had to go back to get Heidi.

So, tell us about your departure, please.

Mine was- yes. Well, as I, I told you I was in- in Austria, and then I, then I went by train to- came to London.

But how did you get Austria?

I told you.

But not on camera. I need to hear it again, please.

Of course. I took- we took a train, and that went up to- not to the border, but up to the border. But there was a- quite an area of mines. "Nobody's Land" it was called. And we went down. There was a peasant waiting for us. I think that we were twelve on that- state. We had to wait till night. Not very- very cold. And he said, "Follow me." And we followed him. I had a suitcase and I had in it, an underpant. And at some point, he said- oh yes, we seen tanks, Russian tanks, and fires because it was a cold, very cold night. And then he said "From now on, go that way. There's a large lake here. When you are on the other side, go straight and that's Austria." And I- then we, we- we did, and we arrived, and we saw lights. And that was- it appeared to- I- I thought that they waited every night, which was very nice of them. And

then they put something on us, and went to a school, I think. Overnight. Food. And about two- two days- later, two days later, they said, "Come in to this hall." And there were desks that various countries on it, showing who they are. And I went to the... UK and then I came by, by train to- the second time I've seen sea. And the first time I've seen two trains going in the same direction. On the Continent it's like this. Here, of course, in England, they went like this. And I went to Swindon.

[1:49:49]

And in Swindon, we were billeted in a place- in a- in a- where soldiers vacated it because they went to the Suez Canal. And then I was there. My first- I never forget- my first English lunch. There was a bowl like this, and it looked like a- a soup. So, I thought that, yeah, let's start with a soup. And it turned out to be- and under it was a piece, this thin, meat with holes. With big holes. So, the eating was very, very little. Anyway, and then it turned out to be that diarrhoea took place. It always is when people are in- so- community. And I said I have to go. By luck, some people came. And there were two Jews, and said, "Anybody is Jewish?" And I said, "Yes." And they took me to East- East London, Bernhard Baron Settlement, whose- it was a well-known name at the time. He was a Lord, a Jewish Lord. And then I went to the Senate House in London. And I said who I am, and they said, "Fine." And they- I said, "I live in, in- in East End." And so, they said, "Barts [St. Bartholomew Hospital] will be good for you, which is very near," - where the meat market was. It's now changed. And I was accepted and I started and- I failed the- my first time my second MB. And I passed the- the other one. And it was a terrible- for me because I always passed everything without much ado. But this time I didn't, because I made the mistake. And that was that there were three root- three group of five questions.

You told us, yes.

[1:52:23]

So I shouldn't go on about it.

No, it's OK. So you, you just- you told us the story before.

Here?

Yeah.

Now?

Yeah. That you answered-

I was- obviously I was too- no I couldn't have been eating a lot. Anyway. Well, then you know- you know-

You passed it.

I passed it. Yes.

And we were talking about your departure from Hungary. What did your parents think about the fact that you wanted to leave?

Perfect. Way, way behind me. The only thing they said, would I please write a letter, "because we like to know how you doing." So, I said, "OK Mum and Dad, I will write to begin with, one letter a day." So, they said, "That's wonderful." So, after about two weeks, I received a letter from Mihaly, from Sweden, saying that "You promised to write to Erzsike and Mandi [their parents], and you're not doing it." "How can you say that? I'm telling you I write a letter every day. I go down and put it in the letterbox." Well, Mihaly said, "I can't tell you, but that's the case. They don't receive it. Maybe you put the wrong address on it." So, I said, "Don't be silly." So, I thought I- I'm making- there is something wrong here, obviously. So, I went down and put that day's letter to a very nice black thing which you do this, and this, and it says not 'letter' it says 'litter'. [both laugh] So I daily put my letters in the litter box! So, I apologised for- for my silliness and I wrote, not every day. But I said - oh yes - I said, "It's fantastic. And- and you don't," - I didn't think you were- of course! You weren't alive all this-

No.

[1:55:07]

When there was a television set like that. And that was something fantastic. And so, I said, "I'm watching television, and today I saw horse racing." Back came a letter. My father: "I am not there to warn you, but I am, and you forgive me. And I know you're not doing this, but I had many patients, psychiatric patients, who lost their life and their livelihood and their spouses because they went to horseracing." "But," I said, "I am sitting in a chair!" "Because- because you can put more money, and then you're running after your money..." I said, "Dad forget it." Actually, it's the least- I never- never, ever thought of looking at it. For a second later they go and they- it's not- nothing to do with me. It's a lot of- I'm sure depends what- I don't know anything about it.

So, you kept in touch with your parents?

Of course. Yes.

So, you were a refugee when you came. Who, which organisations helped you, or which...?

[mishears] Oh, I wasn't a GP when I arrived.

A refugee. A refugee.

Yes, sorry. Sorry.

A refugee. So, who helped you? Who were you aware of, that they helped you? Which organisations?

Ladies- Ladies organisation?

I don't know.

Yes.

Which organisation?

I'm not sure.

Ah.

It was- it is, a very well- known - Women's Association? And the- the help they gave me was a - how do you call what you cover yourself? Not a duvet, but only a-

A blanket?

A blank- No. A blanket is under you. This is over you.

Yeah.

But the problem was- [laughing] was, that it was about this- the width was about this. It was length was alright, but the width was like this, so it really couldn't cover you.

And money-wise? Did somebody give you help? Money?

Yes, the- the Treasury. I had- I had a *stipendium*.

So that's when you studied?

Yes. I got twelve pounds - no, stupid - nineteen pounds a month to eat, to pay for my room and public transport. It wasn't a lot of money. I don't know how, but I went over to my- to France. The Louvre, I wanted to see. How, I don't know. And then it went up to twenty-one pounds and I thought, my God, you know, this is Nobel Prize - this twenty-one pounds.

And did you know any other people when you came to London?

No.

Did you know anyone?

[1:58:34]

Yes. Yes. You might have heard of him. Mr. Balint, Doctor Balint, Michael Balint. Does it make any?

Yes. Go on.

He's a- was a- he analysed my father in Budapest. And my father said, "I have- I am in love with- with my [Peter's] mother. And I want to marry her." And he wasn't quite established, father. So, he said, "Don't do it. Just wait a minute until you are established." And he did. And I was, as I told you in a settlement in, in London, in- in-

East End?

Where?

East End.

Yes. And this name was mentioned to me on my- on my piece of paper, which I got from my dad, who are the one in England or all over the world whom you can call on. And I rang up, Mr. Balint and - Doctor Balint - and I said who I am. "Oh, yes, yes, of course I remember your dad." "I am here. And I would like to as a- as a refugee, would you- could I see you?" "Yes. Sure, sure." So, he gave us his- I was engaged to Vera, so things happen exactly like they did before. So, I went up to- went over there. And how do you call - a lackey? Who opened the door? Who- who is the one who is a...?

Servant?

[2:00:43]

A servant opened the door. "Can I help you sir?" "Yes, it's Mr. Brunner." "Oh, yes. I was told you are coming. Would you mind taking place? Would you mind sitting down in the lounge?" You know, it was too- it wasn't. Anyway, it was a very nice evening. And I said to him, "I've got Vera- was with me." And I was a medical student, but quite a way, not that

much away because second MB I already had, so I still had about two years to go. So, he said- ...and I said, "I would like to marry Vera." And he said, "If you love one another, don't wait for two years. Get married." So, he said exactly the opposite to me what he said to my father in Budapest, twenty years ago. And- here is- I still have it. It's burning in me. We got married in- in a town hall, Marylebone Town Hall in the cellar. And then I had to put it off, because Bart's said that you can't do it, because you're doing this and that. So, there was a week later. And guess what? He gave me twenty pounds. Do you know what twenty pounds was in 1959? You know? No? A fortune! Well, 400 pounds now, 500 pounds? An unknown figure. And, he himself came to the wedding. Well, 'wedding'. There were ten people, I think. Under- under this, which I've- which... [laughs] And I never paid him back, because I wanted to pay him back. Because it meant so much to me that he seen me and he- and I never did. And I could have done and I said tomorrow and tomorrow, and- and I feel awful about it. And about fifty years later- fifty-five years later, I went to the town hall. "Yes, sir, can I help you?" "Yes. We like to see a room where we got married in this established lovely building in the cellar." "Oh, no, sir. That's gone long time ago. That doesn't exist anymore. So sorry." I said, "Can we see it?" "I don't think so, Sir." "Can I see your manager?" "Yes, yes." So, he came along and I told him I like to see that. He said, "Yeah, sure. There's no problem. This fellow who said 'No', will take you there. It's now a room- used- people- it was always only a desk." And that was it. And I said, "Could I see the book? How many people were married?" He says, "Yes, yes." And ours is the last name, they're not used for that anymore. And that just- things which occurred to us.

[2:04:40]

So how did you meet Vera?

Well. Okay. I was going home on the underground. It- then it was called Blackfriars. Now I think it's called- what is that lovely place for music, and...? Anyway, it's a different name now. A lovely theatre...

[Camera man:] Barbican?

Barbican?

Barbican. Thank you. And it's a quite a long way Barbican, or Blackfriars to- to Kings Cross. And I'm talking those time- those days, the carriage was not like now, like we sit now. But we sat two there and two here, like this, not like that. So, the people whom I was talking to in Hungarian were a couple, also refugees, and also at St. Bartholomew's. I can't remember. Obviously, we talked about something. All of a sudden, I hear a touch- somebody's touching my shoulder. So, I looked up and there was an elderly lady who said, "Could you take this piece of paper? And if you are alone, don't hesitate to ring. It's my niece. You never seen anybody more beautiful." So, I said, "Thank you", in Hungarian - all this. And then the train's coming to a stop. I don't know why, but she disappeared. It wasn't her- she lived in Hendon, off Hendon Way. So, I thought either I am, or she is, a little bit - not quite right. But she was right; I was alone. And I thought what can I miss? So, I rang up. And that was her address, phone number, and she says, "Yes, yes, I do remember. Lovely. Yes, I will." And she gave me a date. And I was then still on nineteen pounds a month. To- to go and see Vera, so I thought to myself, you can't go empty handed. I can assure you I could ill afford it. I lived in a room in Hammersmith somewhere. And there was a very nice- many stories, like Selfridges - a huge thing. So, I went up where the flowers were, and I had a bunch of daffodils. And which I could really ill afford it. So, I went where the address- off Hendon Way. "Ah, hello, how are you? Oh, you shouldn't have done it! It was not necessary." I said, "Okay, well, there it is." So, we chatting, and chatting and chatting, nothing no Vera - nowhere. And she doing this beautifully in a vase, my daffodils. And so afterwards she said, after half an hour she said, thank God, "Let's- can we now go over to Vera?" I said, "Yeah- Yes!" And - the daffodils were staying. So, I am empty handed. And so, we had really just over the road, which was back garden, to where Vera was. Apparently. I didn't see it. She was looking, and very - this is all after - very angry, very angry. "How dare she? A woman whose profession is to get here- nobody's up this from the street, picking up people? Who do you think they are? I'm not a cow on a- going to be sold." Which, I didn't know all this until later. And she can get very upset. And we spoke about an hour. And I said when we- everybody disappeared. And I said, "Well, I- I appreciated this hour. I enjoyed it. Can I see- can I see you again?" "Well, yes, well, I'm sorry, but I- within a week I have to go abroad on business." So, I say, "All right. Well, if- if you come back and you have inclination to see me, this is the number. This is my name. And this is the number." I had given a Bart's number.

[2:10:09]

So, one month, two months, three months, four months - nothing. One day I'm going home, taking off my white - overall. And everybody in those days, coats- there was a person who was in this- where we kept our things. So, I said- he said, "Sir! There's a phone call for you." So, I said, "Yes. Okay." And it wasn't Vera. It was Miette, her cousin. "Are you Peter Brunner?" I said, "Yes. I am." "Oh, I'm talking for Veronika Keve." I said, "Yes?" "Anyway, [s]he said that she would like to see- meet you." So, I said, "Yes, that's lovely. When?" And "That's good." And then he gave me Vera's address. And it turned out to be - the delay. [laughing] It turned out to be that she lost the piece of paper I had for Auntie Frieda. She lost it. And Vera is like that. Very typically Vera, that this would have meant the news that "I've got to get in touch with him." Do you understand? And so, they lost it. In those days- now, they aggre- they want together. In those days, there were eleven medical universities. Right? So that took them four months to find out where is the- where is Mr. Brunner. And I said to Vera this, this- this- "How could you know" - in retrospect - "How can you be so stupid if you come at this country in 1956 and in 1957 - yes? - you already got business abroad. That's a bit quick, isn't it?" Anyway, that- and that's how we met. And there are upshots about it, because not only she was angry about the whole thing, but also at that afternoon, her and [her brother] Tom would have gone to see Gun- *Gunfight at the OK Corral*. And- and they did- They said, "No, you're not going because this guy is coming over." So- about twenty years later, I - I bought this film, and we looked at it, and it's very high-class people, but we never understood. Everybody is shooting everybody, but I didn't know the reason. And it was an awful film.

And how had Vera come to England? How had she come?

[2:13:30]

Oh, she came with her family. Tom was twelve. Vera must have been in her twenties- nineteen, and father and mother. Yeah. Because they had Auntie Frieda here - who is- who is Vera's father's sister.

That's how they could come?

Well, they had somebody who came. Somebody who arranged a flat for them. Not a flat- a house upstairs in Hend- off Hendon Way. Anyway, somebody and Miette was a young, vivacious, young girl. And - yes.

*So that meant also when you were together, you also had family then here, or- through Vera?
No?*

In- in-

Once you married?

No. Well, we- we see, yes, Mihaly came over as then, Vera and I- my father, as I told you were there. And we got married. And I went over with Vera.

To Sweden?

To Sweden. Yes.

So, your parents came to Sweden?

Yes.

When did they leave Hungary?

Four- four years after we did.

So, in 1960?

Yes.

And did you father practice once he was in Sweden, or?

Yes, very much so. He, as I told you matriculated in- in Germany, so German was his second mother tongue. He couldn't and he wouldn't like to- you have to have exams and at his age that's not a good idea. Have you heard of Karolinska Institute?

Yes.

It's a world-famous conglomeration of, of research and treatment. And he ended up in the library. So, people who were doing whatever, said, came down on phone, "Doctor Brunner, could you let me have so-and-so, writing in 1894?" And he loved it. And then he went on to the archives. And if not, he got it from Germany. And that's what he did. But, at home, he did have a private practice, either German-speaking, or Hungarian-speaking. Who were some of Mihaly's relatives. His- so, he- he was okay.

So, your parents were happy in Sweden?

[2:16:33]

Yes, very happy.

But you said also that he had published- he- did he publish in German, or in...?

No, no, no, that was when I was- when I was born, yes. Much earlier. The about stut- stutt- stuttering.

About your brother? He published a paper?

Yes. Yes. Yes. In German. The world famous „*Die Journal*“ – everywhere was- yes.

And what was his explanation for the- did he have a psychoanalytic explanation for stuttering?

He might have had but it was in German. I'd never- I don't know. I don't know. I tell you- no, yes, I do. Yes, I do. Mihaly was- had a terrible, terrible problem skin-wise. All over, poor chap. Back and- and- and what you have to know about medicine, that dermatology is a

wonderful idea because you never cure anybody anywhere. And they keep coming. And he had eczema all over the place. So, he slept like this. He was tied up. And I think the anger that he couldn't do what he wanted to do, was responsible for his- but it must be something in it because he never- never recovered. Never was stuttering, as far as I know. And I don't know. It may be, it may be. But it was a terrible- crying overnight. And interestingly enough, here, which was the first patch, some forty years later came back in a in a milder form. And anyway, in those days there were no steroid, and it was treated.

So, tell us how you- where did you settle then with Vera, and how did your life continue here in England?

[2:18:50]

Well. Three years later, around 59, 66- four years later, Michael came along. And then three years afterwards 66, 1960 - Jackie came along. How shall I tell you? She was the epitaph of a wife and a mother. [pause] Perfect. Everybody loved her. I never received a phone call- "Is Vera- is Vera there?" "Yes." "Can Vera do," - this and that. Or somebody: "How do you make *Kolozsvári rakott káposzta?*" That a- that's a very lovely food. Hungarian- from- from Cluj. And then she had this- and she had the recipe. And as I say, she had everybody's phone number. I never had to see the book. Totally, utterly what- whatever you see on me, it's all she bought. Whatever you see on her, I insisted of buying. She never, ever bought anything for herself, but was very, very-

Generous?

Sorry?

Generous.

Very generous, to, to us, to the children, to others. But she just, I don't think she- she just never had money. On the other hand, she was- for four years she- she was a manager of our- of our GP surgery. She- she done a million pounds a year minimum going and coming. She- through- she said to patients- she- she hired and fired people. She'd give me, and George and David - my colleagues - the check. And there was no asking "Why do you? What this check

is for? How did you get it?" She didn't say that, because we all believe that she's absolutely hundred percent right. So, her, her terrible progress now. It's not a genius. She wasn't a genius. She was a kind of woman - for me, it was perfect.

[2:21:58]

And where did you settle? Where did you live?

Oh, we, we started in- we started in Eastcote, which was above the surgery, which one of my partner John Cohen- I spoke to him today. Wants to see Vera, with me. And that was his father's house. And we lived above the surgery. Then Barbara, who is David's wife said, "I have a house for you to buy." And that was in Pinner. And that was lovely. And we stayed there for twenty-odd years. And then we moved to Northwood, where we spent also that amount of time. And- and now we're Mill Hill. We had a lovely, lovely time. Holidays. Then we bought Spain, a- an- in an urbanisation. And there was the sea. There was a car- well, there still is a car in the garage.

So you went to Spain a lot on holidays? Family holidays?

[2:23:33]

Yes. Yes. We came home one day- tonight - if you let me - I'll go, and every Tuesday night we play bridge with people I knew sixty-two years ago. And we're still talking every single Tuesday. And I'm really going, not for the bridge so much, but to- it's like a bus- I take a bus. I talk to- talk to them, "What you're doing?" "What your childrens are doing?" Our children are also friends. And we came home and I sat with Vera. We fallen in love with this urbanisation: the tennis courts, pool, a beautiful communal pool. And we said- we bought a villa- no, we bought an apartment. But it's not- wasn't an apartment. It's- it's a- end of a terrace house. There's only one here. So, two houses were merged. And they said, "You didn't buy anything enough for us?" I said, "No, I didn't buy anything for you, but come down and have a look." And they did. Needless to say, every one of them bought a place in Co-Torremuelle. And we met- we were here together. We were there together, or we went- somewhere else- America, we went together.

And they're Hungarians as well?

[2:25:13]

Yes, I have very lovely English friends and Hungarian-

But this particular group. Is it mixed?

Mixed? Mixed. Yes. I went yesterday to a concert with Rachel who- Rachel Young, who is part of this, from Pinner. And have you heard of Sir- oh, God- sometimes I have problems. A concert in the- in the Festival Hall and there was Peter Frankl, who is a well-known pianist. Pauk George who was the number one violinist. He didn't come because he didn't- he didn't like those. It was...Enlightenment, you know, the- the Enlightenment, the-

Orchestra of [the Age of] Enlightenment?

Yes. And it was a beautiful concert.

So, you had a nice group of friends?

A very nice group of friends. And I told Rachel that we're going. "Oh, you- going- you, typical, you didn't buy?" "No, I didn't buy a ticket. I didn't know you," and so forth. So, she bought a ticket. So, she rang me yesterday, "Oh, Peter, come at four o'clock. I'll take you because it's no point going to be two cars." And she's off Finchley Road, so it was easy. That sort of partnership. Yes. Wonderful. And now, with Vera being away, it had a totally different- not different, but I don't- I'm going- tomorrow, I'm going to my son for lunch, and I'm going- evening I'm going to Tom and Gillian for evening. You know, it's ever end- it's never ending. In the 'How's You Been?' [sessions at synagogue?] everybody asked me to, to come and have a meal. Well, I only gone to one up till now. But they are- they are kosher. So, I didn't know what to take there. They're fantastic.

So, let me ask you, what identity- when you had your children and you raised them, how did you- what identity did you want to give them, in terms of...?

I'll say something Vera wouldn't like. [laughs]

Go on.

[2:28:03]

No, I told you. No, I- I- I just thought that all they need, in my view, all you need- all they need to do is to how we live. How we love one another, how we don't fight one another, how everything we had - because every family had - we made- we somehow dealt with that particulars, and found a solution. I was very anxious that they will go to university, and they both did. So, maybe it was too good to continue.

And in terms of Jewishness, did you- because you...?

Oh, yes, yes. Yes. They know they Jewish. Yes, they both know they're Jewish. Jackie is- Jackie was, I think, in Borehamwood secretary of a shul for a few years. But none of us are- Michael is not a mem- no, Michael is a member. I am a member, but neither of us go to shul. And I had a fracas there when they said- I said, when I- it's- it's about 1000 pounds a year. So, I said, "What is this? What-?" Ben- Ben something. Oh no. "You have to pay for your Burial Society- Jewish [Joint] Burial Society." I said, "I'm not interested in Jewish Burial Society. If I die, my children will be all right money-wise and they can- and I want to be cremated and then throw away any way they like." "Well, do you know, Peter, that over half of people belong to a shul for the Burial Society?" I said to him, "Look, I'm not responsible. I admire other people's beliefs. This is mine." And then the Rabbi, Miriam, lovely, lovely lady, Miriam said, "Alright, then. Why don't you- why don't we," - meaning the shul, or the community - "will pay for you." I said, "You're mad. Why should other people pay for my burial?" And anyway, I was much too late joining. So, I have to live another fifty years, which is a bit optimistic, to do- for the Burial Society to be able to manage my- I just don't like this interference, which I feel it is Michael and Jackie's job. I want them to do this. And they are- I wouldn't say anxious to do it. I don't think they're anxious for me to die. [Bea laughs] I don't know exactly. And if they do, it's okay with me.

[2:31:33]

So, you want to belong to synagogue, but not to the Burial Society?

Well, well, really, because of Miriam I'm not- I don't do anything. Yes. Now I paid to Burial Society, and but it's strictly is in my will to Michael and Jackie: Do not use the Burial Society. I don't want-

Why is that so important for you? Why?

I feel it's an interference at a certain occasion, which is a family affair. I think that- I'm not proud and there's no proudness. It's just I don't want to be interfered where everybody, hopefully, either are glad or not. [both chuckle] I don't need another society to do what I think Michael and Jackie should do. And they know it.

OK. Speaking of Jewishness, did you find when you came as a refugee that Jewish organisations helped you? I mean-

No.

Was there any- did you have any contact with any Jewish organisations?

[2:32:56]

Well, Bernhard Baron Settlement was, and not my- that's where I was taken.

Initially.

Initially - no, no.

What- what- How do you spell the settlement?

Bernhard Baron Settlement.

Bernhard Baron-

Look it up on Google.

Yeah. Yeah.

No there was- nothing.

You didn't go to synagogue, or was there any other support?

No. No. The only one is the AJR. And that wasn't my idea. Tom said, "Why don't you join AJR? It's a very nice association. And they know what to do and how to help." This is when Vera began to be- and so I went up- you know. Well, of course you know. It's two minutes from us. And I was very impressed. You know, Rosemary?

Yes.

Well, "Oh, you know, I can't go now I will let you know," - who is the other one who is not Jewish, a blonde lady, a Romanian. It's to do with Fla- Florina!

Yes.

You know her?

No.

Lovely. And I never received anything from Germany. All my friends have. Maybe this is like the Burial Society.

You didn't want it?

No. Didn't want it. Now, that it's costing me 1600 pounds a week, I thought I would. Vera has got it. Mine still didn't- it is now over a year.

What is it? A pension or a compensation, or-?

She got both: a pension-

From?

[2:34:53]

From Germany. And one lump sum. But I hope it will be, but if we don't sell Spain, I don't know what will happen. From Spain, by the time all- you pay all the taxes because that's- they're not short on making taxes. Everything is taxed. I think I will have a year-and-a-half I can, or a year maybe, I can get Vera going. But after that, I am penniless, really. So-

Difficult - very difficult.

Yes. Yes, it is. It is.

Peter, just I wanted to ask you a few questions about- we talked about- how would you decide- define yourself in terms of your identity, today?

OK. A- a middle class, Jewish, not religious, honest citizen. About that. Nothing major.

And when did you become British? When did you receive your-?

Quite early. I think it was '59. I think '59 – '62, something like that. I think three years later.

And do you feel British now? Do you feel British?

[2:36:52]

No. I love- I love Britain, but of course I- I don't know how- I have- how, how could I? I was born in Romania, brought- brought up in Hungary, then came here. That's- that's the Jewish business. I am – no - I am much more. No. I love the British behaviour. There are certain things nobody can do better than them. But I also have to tell you that this is not the country of 1956. Unfortunately, things happening here, which we never, ever thought that they can, in this lovely place. England was, to me, a heaven when I arrived – just, in one word. In other

word, I like the- they were- they are very nice people. They are very- people who help. If you ask where to go, they said - even if they are go the other way – “follow me”. That sort of thing. And the beautiful thing is, you cannot go in rugby that- that way, unless you pass the ball back. You have to be British to get this idea: you can't go forward unless you throw back. Everything which is worth- football, they decided, alright? Then there is tennis. So, why is it 15 30 40 45? What, what- what is the correlation between these? Do you understand? And this is what- what I like about it. It's different. I- when I've written prescriptions, it was- I now honestly forgot. It wasn't milligram, it was some other thing. And then I couldn't get used to that somebody - an athletic – “six foot three”. Well, I don't know what six foot three is, but if you tell me, “two metres, three centimetres” - I- I can see. Not talking about hands or yards or everything. And, and that- that is- that is how they are.

But did you find- you worked as a GP for many years?

Yes.

Did you ever face any discrimination, being...?

Never.

No.

[2:39:45]

Never. Never ever. This was in Ruislip, Eastcote, sometimes Pinner. And- and we had private practice as well. So, we covered quite a large area.

What was the name of the practice, or?

No names. Oxford Drive, One Oxford Drive – the name. Or, for three- for thirty years, thirty-five years, every Tuesday- we are- every Tuesday, we said to David, that I made twenty-three pounds or twenty-six - whatever I made. All right? And George said the same thing. And David said nothing. All right? So now he knows what he got. So, he added all the three up

and just said, "This is for you. This is yours." This is cash. Never, in thirty-five years, have we had any- anything wrong.

So, you worked, the same three people, together?

Yes. Together, always, yeah. Well, I have to what they call this- not now legal, or it's other- I had to buy myself into the practice. So, to receive- to- to reach thirty-three and a third- to be equal, it cost me five years. At the beginning, I did more surgery, and so forth. And at the end, it was- I, I didn't care. And they just told me what it is- how much I get, and that's what I got. Everything was lovely. There were difficult times, because all the children were- one thing, among others, I didn't get right is the English educational system. In- in Hungary, you- you went to school. Finished. Here, you go to this, or to that, and to private, it's not private, is Jewish, is not Jewish. [Bea laughs] So I asked around, and around me everybody went to- children went to private school. So, I said, "You going to private school?" And they did. But when the tax came to pay, and the private tuition to pay, I had to re-mortgage my house! And I went- that's also gone now. Is there a bank manager anywhere? Have you recently seen a bank manager? So, I went in and said, "Look, I'm in trouble." And so, he- he said, "How much do you want?" And I said how much I want. So, I signed that I owe the bank this much. And the house is the what they call- if I can't pay, they have the house. And this went on and he was lovely. And I went in, "Yes, Peter. Do you want a coffee?" and, "How much money?" And, it became a sort of yearly- yearly business. So, there was- not difficulty, because it was easily- in three months' time I can repay it. But England was- the last one is the best. What- on what language do you have when you talk about cricket? You- you- you know- You- you're OK with cricket? You know the sort of thing. When they "in" - they are out. If they are "out", they are in. And again, the various- well, it's- it's quite unique. Quite unique.

[2:43:53]

So, do you feel- where is your home? Where do you feel at home?

Here. Here. Now I don't have a home. But this used to be my home. And for what it's worth, it's the only place I can be under cover of rain, and books, music, TV. I only had really one home. That was Zsombor. When it wasn't in my home. I only went there for summer

holidays. But for me that was- perhaps it was what I became. Oh, another thing I would ask to say when you said who do I think I am. Much too much - never know the word. I get involved, psychologically too much. I'm very easy to make me feel- what's the word I'm looking for?

Sensitive?

[2:45:21]

Yes, but- where other people will deal with it, and finish, I'm- I'm not dealing with it. I'm slowly dealing with it. I could- I am always, used to be, always the same. I never was up or down. Vera, bless her, three times a day, [whistling sounds] and then apologised. Always apologised. And it was nice. Yeah, so I think- a play, or a film can make me very easily crying- not crying but, crying inside.

Emotional. You're very emotional.

That's the word I was looking for. Yes, I am too- maybe, I don't know. I'm too emotional.

And do you feel, now, that your past experiences the war experiences are coming back - more?

Always. Always with me. All the thing I told you: every day, every night. You can't.

And what is it? What comes back? What is the memory or what is the- the main thing which comes back to you?

Well, I want to- not to talk about Vera and the two children. I mean, that's obvious. No. The one which constantly comes in, is my childhood, because I never felt so happy. And- the rest is- I'm a bit proud, perhaps that for- for me, the name Brunner is mean not just a name - to me. Obviously to you, your name is the same. And I always wanted that to be carried on. And I am only a part of a chain. And I'm rather- not glad or- but it fills me with good feeling. The best is - which I had the other Friday evening - the relationship between Michael and Jackie.

And they hug one another, and go to one another and go to skiing together. And that to me is the best feeling. Yes.

[2:48:22]

And did you talk about the past to your children and to your grandchildren?

Yes, yes. It came from my grandchildren, one of them. And said, "Papa, we don't know anything about you before you came to London." And I got them together after- to get them together is- they're- Leeds in University, Bournemouth in University, the other one is in Texas – I don't know. And, yes, they listened to what I said. Perhaps not what I'm telling you, but yes, certain stages. And then I took them out to a Chinese restaurant, guess what? They want to see every- they want to go to the same Chinese restaurant every month. I think the meeting is over. Which is nice. I'm proud of Michael, who is a senior anaesthetist. Jackie's a senior psychologist. And they all- it's very important that they're all more than I am. And- and I'm very proud of that.

They carried on the medical tradition in your family.

Yes, yes. And I forgot Danny, who is a star. Who is on the stage. He's now finishing Aladdin for- after three years. And he already had two other- he's musical. He's a music- every- everything is musical. He's dancing and he's getting women up and throwing them down, and- he- he will. Well, he is, but he will be, a, a somebody. And we all go to see. Unfortunately, it's very expensive. And, yes, I'm happy. I'm satisfied. And in a sense, to come along here without anybody, without language, without nothing- the fact that I know the Shakespeare's Sonnets is, is, is- it's not something which I could live on. No, satisfied.

And that's why you chose- why- that's why you chose England to come? You could have chosen other countries. Are you happy you chose England?

[2:51:10]

Very happy. Yes, I could. But I was at an anglophile. I don't know why. I- I thought that the way it is, the democracy, the free trade- all this meant- and- and Shakespeare.

And you came as a refugee to Britain, and do you still feel that you are a refugee? How- would you still consider yourself a refugee?

Well, there is no other adjective I can say. In- in law, I am. I'm not a Brit. I'm a British subject. But by law, I am. Yes, I'm a refugee, and I'm very happy about it. I- I- no, I wouldn't have gone outside Europe. I would go- certainly not to United States. Another good book I'm reading is Michelle Obama. Very well worth reading is- she's so clever. No, I wouldn't have left Europe. Next day- next one would have been France. Never Germany. And Italy. These were the three choices.

And is there anything today you miss from- from Hungary, from...?

Nothing, nothing. Not a thing. No. They all gave me *szórás* [dispersion, scattering], death. Nothing. And what they're doing now, I don't know if you follow it. Why the EU doesn't kick them out, I don't know. If they talk about Hungary- I'm not even- I don't mind- no, I- I. There is- there, where we're going- we're always going Isti and Francis to play bridge. They love- Francis is the only spouse who is- who is not Hungarian. I don't like to say- I'm not a Hungarian. The only thing I am, is Jewish. I am nothing else. A Jewish person living in a country where I love to live. That's what - who I am. I'm not Romanian. Not Hungarian. I am a Jewish person living here. And that's why, if you meet a Jewish chap from Timbuktu, you think, "oh, I know this guy for fifty years" - because he's the same as you are. And I'm not important- not happy about editing genes. And it's going to go too far - too far. I'm not against putting a chip in your brain which we have very good results with, with Parkinson's. And perhaps Vera's problem will be in the near- in the future.

[2:54:37]

This is dementia? For dementia?

Yes. Yes, yes. And I follow this. But the joy comes from Michael, Jackie and Vera. Sorry, a different order: Vera, Michael and Jackie. Can I stop while you still...?

Just one- one last question. Do you have any message for anyone who might want- who might watch this film in the future, based on your experiences?

No, if they watch- no. If they watch it, it's all me, talking. And they will say yes or no. No, I don't want to- actually, this is what I've done. I- I gave myself a picture of how I feel about it. And I hope that they will agree with some of them, and I'm sure they will disagree with others.

Is there anything I haven't asked you which you would like to add? Something we haven't talked about?

[pause] *Uncle Vanya.*

Yeah? The book?

No, it's not a book.

The play?

Yes.

Yeah.

Chekov.

Yeah.

You know it?

Yeah.

Well then, you know, what I mean.

Go on, explain please.

[2:56:26]

He is a doctor. Every- every Chekhov play has a doctor. Right? And he always comes to Sonia. Sorry, he always comes to the house where Sonia is. It's- it's a- it's a beautiful Russian house and acres and- and he reads. And Sonia says, "Would you like tea?" "Yes. Is the samovar, is still on?" "Yes, please." And then they- they don't see one another. Oh, sorry, are you all taking this?

Yeah.

And they don't see one another. And there's a quietness, but you know something will happen. And this is where I come in. And Sonia says, "What would you do if you knew somebody and you really feel something? Would you be honest and tell him? Or would you keep it for yourself?" He's still reading. And then he says, "Sonia, I have to go. It's becoming dark, but I will think about it." In other words, neither of them are able to say, "I love you", or "I need you". But this is exactly the same as with women's clothing. If you have a décolletage like this, this is not at all sexy - for me. But if you have the slightest décolletage or the beginning of what you want to see, or what you want to know. It- it is then you're working- You- you idealising what it is. And that's the same thing. I'm just getting carried on a bit. Yeah.

Okay. I think this is. We need to interpret this, but, anyway- or for anyone who is watching this can interpret it in many different ways. Peter, thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed-

Pleasure.

And sharing your life with us.

Pleasure.

And, now we have to look at some photos or we'll come back to look at some photos.

Yes, I leave them down there.

One second-

[End of interview]

[2:59:24]

[2:59:40]

[Start of photographs]

Photo 1

So, this is my great-grandfather. And I didn't know him at all, of course, because he died after a prostate operation the year before I was born. I know that all my- my father and his sisters and brothers adored him and he was very much- read. He also kept a Jewish house and apparently was a lovely person.

What was his name?

I don't know his name because he was always referred as either 'Tolstoy' or 'Tata'.

Do you know where the picture was taken?

Oh, this picture is taken in Zsombor.

Photo 2

Oh, this is Charlotta, and she is the wife of the- my grandfather's. And apparently her face is- I always heard saying that it's a Brunner face, but I don't know about that. She had eleven children, and nine- and three died close after being born. And seven brothers and sisters lived until the Holocaust. And they lived well, and they all loved one another. I've seen them together all the time, or many times, never any verbal or any other problem. They all loved one another.

Photo 3

This is my- or one of the favourite pictures of mine. Here is my grandfather, with his children, so that is Tata, with from the right, Zelma, Rozalka, Olga, and then my father, and

the last on the left is far the most wonderful person I ever come across, my uncle, except my father. It- it was taken in Zsombor in 1925.

Photo 4

This is my father in Germany where he studies- studied as a medical student. And this is a very good friend of his. And they kept up- after they both qualified, they're still kept up a friendship.

Which one is your father?

My father is on the- if you look at it, on the right.

Photo 5

This picture is in Kolozsvár in 1935. And these are my parents. And I am looking at the photographer.

Photo 6

This photograph is from 1935 in Zsombor, July. And I'm sitting on the bench. I must have been tired - because I never sat down, ever - or maybe waiting for some food.

Photo 7

The picture below is a year later. It's 1936. And we are, from left to right, in chronological order Anna was the big, the large, the big girl – the old girl at the time, and then Imre and then myself, and we end up with Mihaly, in Zsombor.

Photo 8

This picture is from Zsombor as well. And it's one of the rare ones when we all went to- to drive around to the next villages and back. And it was, I still remember it as so special. And Muska was wait- coming to take care of us. It was one of my- among many hundreds of remembering Zsombor, perhaps the better one, the best one.

Photo 9

Yes, this picture is from 1941 and it is in Kolozsvár. Mum, Mihaly and myself.

Photo 10

Oh, this picture is from Kolozsvár, '41. And this is the school- in school uniform. And if you lucky you find me in the middle.

Photo 11

Kolozsvár, I like this picture because everybody's laughing, happy. And I remember it.

When was it taken?

This must have been taken in early 40s.

And where?

This is Budapest in a – in a park.

Photo 12

This is after our wedding, in Marylebone Office, in the Town Hall, and it was taken sixty-one years ago.

Photo 13

This is our family in 1966. From left to right, Jacqueline, Vera, Peter, and Michael.

Photo 14

This picture was taken in Spain. It was our first visit there when we decided to buy the flat where we had so much fun. Thirty-seven years ago.

Who is in the picture?

Oh, picture. From left to right, myself, Vera, Jackie and Michael.

Photo 15

These are the Brunners in 1935 in Zombor. From left to right: Katika, Ilonka, Imre, Muska, Peter, Erszike, Mihaly, Apu, Anna, Olga. And the two at the left were people whose job was to keep an eye on all the children.

And what are they sitting on? What is this?

Well, they sitting on a platform where, behind them behind that door was stuff which we kept for next year, after, for animal- animals to feed during the- during the winter.

And who- who didn't survive, from this picture?

Katika, Imre, no- Katika, Ilonka, Imre, Muska, these are the ones who gone. Because they kept- they stayed in Zsombor, after being- begging for us and the peasants come and will- well, I told you about that. Notwithstanding that my father was in, as you know, in Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt. But he came back he came back- he came back.

Okay, Peter, thank you again for sharing your story and your photographs with us.

It's a pleasure.

[End of photographs]
[3:10:36]