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# Interview Transcript Title Page

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**REFUGEE VOICES**

**Interview No.** RV233

**NAME:** Kurt Marx

**DATE**: 14th March 2019

**LOCATION:** London

**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

**[Part One of Interview]**

**[0:00:00]**

*Today is the 14th of March 2019. We are conducting an interview with Mr. Kurt Marx. My name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.*

*What is your name please?*

Kurt Marx.

*And when were you born?*

I was born 31st of August 1925.

*And where?*

In Cologne.

*Kurt, thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the Refugee Voices Archive.*

My pleasure.

*Can you tell us a little bit about your family background?*

Yes. I was born in Cologne. We had a large family in Cologne. And yes, I mean I was- went to school in Cologne. First I went to the normal local school, which one did. And after a year or two, I don't quite remember which year this was, we were dismissed from the school as we were Jewish and they were afraid we might contaminate the rest of the class or something. And we went to the Lützowstraße, which was the Jewish primary school in Cologne. It was a very large school. The interesting thing was, just as we were dismissed from the local German schools, so were the Jewish teachers. So there was no shortage of Jewish teachers. So the teaching was rather better than normal, I should imagine, because there were…

[Sound break]

*Yes, so we were talking about the school in the Lützowstraße.*

**[0:02:01]**

Yes, so I went to the Lützowstraße. And I went there for however many years, couple, or three years. And then luckily I went to the Jawne which was the senior, or the high school. Don't know what it was called. Anyway it was a further- a high- higher education. And we were lucky, again, that the headmaster was a thinking man and that he, after Kristallnacht, decided he wanted to move the school to England. Cause he said, "One can't live in Germany if this has happened. Who knows what else is going to happen?" And that was the problem. This was November 1938… and he started to work on it. And we were the first ones to go. In January we were already in England, which was quite- looking back on it- how he managed to organise this. The people. All the… legalities and everything that went with it, he- and twenty- I think forty children altogether in our first, the first group that came to England. We were here in January '39. That's why I'm here. Else I wouldn't be here. And all together we had older ones and younger ones. Some went to Manchester, some went to Liverpool, and a small group went to Brighton. And we went to- we came to London. We lived in a hostel in London. We were supported by the- at that time the Walm Lane Synagogue. They were our sponsors. And yes, there were- well, it didn't last all that long because war broke out in- in September. And we were evacuated from London with all the other London children or with many London children. Thousands- tens of thousands of children were evacuated into the country and we were part of that evacuation. So we arrived- shortly after the upheaval

coming here, was a new upheaval. We went- we were sent from London, where we were still together, the boys, we were quite happy, or reasonably happy to be together. We were suddenly with- billeted with strange people, English people… who were amazing. When we arrived in Bedford, they marched us through the town. Hundreds of kids. They knocked on people's doors and said, "How many children will you take?" And people opened their doors; they took one, or two… kids they'd never seen before. Youngsters. Boys, girls. And strangely enough most of the people chose girls in the first instance. The boys were left. In the end there were only boys left and we were already on the outskirts of the town and they took two boys. In fact it was one of our boys. We'd stuck together. It was a, a terraced… house. Small terraced house. If you opened the front door, you were in the front room; there was no hall or anything. There was an elderly couple, I suppose they were in their fifties at the time, probably, perhaps a little older. And a daughter they- she was still at home. They each had their own little bedroom. And the daughter moved out of her bed, moved in with the mother and us, the two boys shared her bed. In- just like that.

**[0:06:00]**

They had no idea who we were, what we were, where we came from. And in the first instance they couldn't understand and they found it difficult to understand these London children. [half-laughing] Not realising what- what we were, who we were, where we had come from. But I must say they were very good. They were very nice people. And I stayed- first they- what used to happen, government paid twelve shillings and six pence at the time for each evacuee. And that was considered to be sufficient money to feed a child. Twelve and six pence. How much is that? Sixty-five p [pence]? Sixty-two p - a week. And eventually when I started to work I earned twelve and sixpence a week. That was my wage. And I gave it to my landlady. She gave me sixpence a week out of that. Gave me sixpence pocket money. And that's- that was the beginning of my working life. I went to the local school in Bedford. The local -what's called a secondary modern, senior school, whatever. When I was fifteen, school was finished so we had one- I had one year in this school in Bedford. And… I was very lucky. I somehow I feel I've been lucky, most of the time. At home I was a very keen - as a little boy - athlete. I could jump almost my own height. I was like a flea. Don't know how that was possible, but anyway I did. This was discovered at school. Of course within a couple of weeks I was in the school athletic team. Now…in English school if you are a good athlete or a good footballer or anything, that's – they like that. Obviously they liked it very much.

And anyway, I became friendly- or the headmaster befriended me and we were friends all our- all his life. He- for thirty, forty years we were good friends. And he was, he appreciated problems that we had, where we had come from, what had happened. And he was- we were invited to the headmaster of the school on Sunday afternoons for tea, which was almost unheard of in a school like that, you know. But that's- that was the early experience I had here.

**[0:08:37]**

*And were you with other Jawne boys in that school?*

There were two or three, that's all. Strangely enough, one of the boys… was one of the children who came from Czechoslovakia with Nicolas Winton. And we remained friends all our lives. He died last year, unfortunately. I didn't meet him anymore. He came from Czechoslovakia. He was a naughty boy; he was always in trouble at school. But it's interesting the character of this child. Later on the Czechs took these children to Wales to a- get a good education. He went back to Czechoslovakia after the war, went to a technical college there, learned how to fly and he was one of the pilots who flew in the Israel War of Independence. So this naughty boy… had this in him. This kind of aggression, kind of- and yes, he became a very successful businessman later on.

*What was his name?*

His original name was Hugo Meisl, and he became Hugo Marom. That was his name in Israel.

*You were with Hugo Marom in the same school?*

Yes. You knew him?

*Yeah.*

Really?

*Yes.*

Is that so?

*Yes. Quite well.*

Big fellow.

*Yes, because in Israel…*

Yeah…

*… his family are very, very friendly with my cousin who lives next door.*

**[0:10:02]**

You knew his wife Martha?

*Very well.*

Did you really?

*Yes.*

Isn't that incredible?

*Oh, my God. That is incredible.*

We had a mutual friend when we were in Africa.

*Yes?*

The Israelis opened a flying school in Ghana at the time after independence. And this young couple who came, he was a flyer in the Israeli Airforce. And his wife and my wife are very

good friends. She was also a very good friend of Martha's. And when I met Martha, I could understand; my wife and Martha were the same kind of person. Outgoing, very nice, very- it was quite, quite amazing when I met her. I mean I knew her. And she- they were- came from completely different backgrounds but they were same people. And they had the same friends.

*So Martha is from Slovakia as my mother and her sister. And they lived- my aunt lived literally it's five minutes-*

Really?

*- in Tsahala in Israel.*

Well, they lived in, in… in Ramat HaSharon.

*Yeah. Tsahala.*

Yes.

*Yeah. Well it is a very small world.*

A small world. It gets smaller…

*Yeah, probably.*

… because as I told you when we were in- when I was in Minsk, I met my wife's cousin's son. And I hadn't seen him for thirty- thirty-five years. When I saw him he was a little boy but he recognised the name. It's all coincidence.

*Anyway, Kurt. Let's go back to the beginning.*

Yes.

*Can you tell us a little bit about the milieu you grew up in? Your grandparents. Your, you know, set the scene a little bit for us.*

**[0:11:58]**

Well, my grandfather- they lived in Poll, which is on the other side of the Rhine. And in- in my day, Poll was well outside the city. It was a- in the country. My grandfather had been a cattle dealer so there- it was kind of a farm that they lived in. And I used to love to go to see my grandma- I didn't know him. He died a year after I was born. And go to the- to their house, there were cows in the cowsheds. Pigs in the pigsty. Chickens. All kinds of farm animals. Quite a bit operation. Big garden, big fields where the cows grazed.

*And where was this?*

In Poll.

*In Poll.*

Today there is a supermarket there. I went there, but somebody put the *Stolpersteine* outside the building where they had lived. And the- at that time it was out of town, you know, a long way out. So that was the grandmother. My- there was one aunt who had- was not married and she got married when grandfather died when I was a year old maybe. And he had also been a cattle dealer. He got married and could continue the business, so that's why it was still in existence in my time. So that was on that side of the Rhine.

*What were they called? What was, your grandmother- What was her name?*

The uncle then was– S H E Y E [Scheye]- I think. Now that's another interesting story. They were- the whole family, he, his wife and three cousins of mine were sent to Lodz, deported to Lodz, to the Lodz ghetto. And in- I've got a card here, copy of a card. In 1941, he had written to his brother-in-law in Cologne - '41 - that he needed money. And the brother-in-law in Cologne sent him money to Lodz. And I've got a card confirming receipt of the money. So within the country, during the war, from Germany to Poland there was still communication. They could send money there and he confirmed receipt of this money. Which is – unthinkable!

*Yeah.*

**[0:14:40]**

They had already been deported, but they were in the ghetto in Lodz and they were able to communicate with the people outside. And they received the money because I can show it to you; I've got a copy of it. And… And it's- they're… all things that you can't really believe that it was possible at the time. But then eventually I think they were sent- I don't know where they- there is a record of what happened to them finally. They were obviously- they didn't survive.

*So was that your mother's family, the grandmother?*

My grandmother, she died very young. Well, early. I knew her but she- I don't know, I was five, six, seven years old.

*But was it your mother's mother?*

My mother's mother.

*Yes.*

But the grandfather he actually died a natural death in 1940. He was still lucky. Whereas the rest of the family who were there, were all sent to various camps. I don't know which ones. So the house in- in Gelsenkirchen where my- the whole family had lived. My mother had three- four sisters and a brother- five sisters and a brother. They all were living in Gelsenkirchen. Also the great-grandparents were living there. They had been quite a prominent family in the town. And the house that he lived in, or he owned, was a large house in the- in the main business street in, in, in Gelsenkirchen was the Bahnhofstraße. I don't know whether you know it. And his was one of those large houses there. And I remember in the ground floor there were three or four retail shops. And they were living in the house above it. Eventually, it was sold to the- or forcibly sold to the- it was a department store next door. And today, we've been there to have a look at it. The department store is twice the size it used to be when I remember it. And the second half is where my grandfather's house had

been. But of the whole family, I'm the only survivor of that- of the- my mother's side of the family. Nobody- the immediate family. There was a, a cousin- my wife's cousin who she went to Israel very early on but she obviously is not alive anymore.

**[0:17:20]**

*And what was the name of the family in Gelsenkirchen?*

Herz.

*Herz.*

Herz and Rubens. Rubens was the- my grandmother's family who had come- grandfather had come from north- north of Germany somewhere, Friesland, wherever that is. But of the whole family, there wasn't one survivor, although the children, the cousins that I had- one- some were older, a couple of younger ones. There weren't that many.

*But there it was sort of- it was more rural. I mean their experience-*

Where?

*Gelsenkirchen.*

No…

*No?*

They lived in the main-

*Oh, they lived in the main-*

Main- in the main road, you know, and it was a very- very busy, relatively wide- it's not such a wide street when I was there, now, but Bahnhofstraße meant that the main station was at the end of the road which was the- the main street in the town.

*So what shops, what did they have? You said they had shops.*

Well I don't know; in the building there were.

*Right.*

There was one was a, I don't know- I can't quite remember what they were. No, one I do remember. There were- they had- they were selling coffee and they were roasting coffee. And there was always this wonderful smell of roasting coffee which you could smell everywhere. And it was a mining- a mining town at that time and you could see it in the back yard there, where the- where the soil was, was quite uneven where the- obviously where the mines were, below the city.

*And they had Braunkohle [brown coal] there? Wasn't it?*

Yes.

*Yeah.*

No, no. There were-

*No?*

**[0:19:03]**

No, they had deep mines. But of course that was closed down years ago.

*Yeah?*

No, not- at the time they were still, they were working, you know.

*So would you visit there regularly?*

Not all that- we went- yes, as a small boy, yes, I remember we used to go there and visit grandparents. I remember when my grandmother was still alive. I was a little boy, and she had diabetes and she would inject. And I was fascinated by this. Whenever she went into her bedroom to inject herself I used to go with her to have a look to see what she was doing. She was an elderly lady dressed in black. And then she would inject into her leg and I don't know, I was five, six years old maybe. But she died- well I was quite- quite small when she died.

*And what are your earliest memories of Cologne?*

Earliest memories of Cologne? They're not so- so early, strangely enough. Well at school of course when I was six years old I remember that- that period. But before that, not very much. I went to the local school.

*Where did you live? What was your address? Where did you live…?*

Well we lived in, in- in Klettenberg at the time, Petersbergstraße, which was only around the corner was the Kletten- Klettenberggürtel. And when this lady I told you about in Cologne, she took a photograph of the house that my uncle lived in, which was just around the corner. And when I was there I said I couldn't remember the number of the house. So she went into the archives and found an old telephone directory of 1937, and of course the name, and address where my uncle and aunt used to live and their telephone number is - in there. So she took a photograph of the building. I've got it somewhere.

*And we're just- This is just- Oh, one second.*

[sound break]

*Yes, so you- just tell me the- the address again?*

Witte- Wittekindstraße number seven.

*And this is in?*

In Sülz –

*In Sülz –*

Köln, Sülz. Yes. And before that we lived in Klettenberg, which is not all that far away from there, in Petersbergstraße.

*And was it a flat or…?*

No- yes.

*A house? – A flat.*

A flat, yes. We were in a flat.

*And tell us a little bit about Klettenberg and Sülz. What sort of areas are they?*

**[0:21:40]**

It was a- it was- it was nice area then and it's- apparently it's still a nice area to live in. There are- it's interesting, people basically live in apartments.

*Yeah.*

Which was unusual where I said my uncle lived around the corner, they had a house.

*Yes.*

Which wasn't all that- not that many people lived in a house. They mainly lived in apartments, bigger or smaller. But interesting enough, now the apartment we lived in and the apartment of these people I know over there, the design is the same. You know exactly, as you come in to the flat, you know where everything is. So there must have been a standard design with the hall and the kitchen and all the rooms that are off it. Very similar. Which I of course didn't know, before.

*So who lived in there, you and your parents?*

We lived, yes, we lived in…
*The three of you?*

In our- our flat. It was a- I suppose a three-bedroom flat. And strangely enough I went back some time ago to have a look. Somebody took me, we went along. And there was only a young- young boy there; he was twelve years old and he let us in. And- which he shouldn't have done. Complete strangers. Two strangers come in there and she told him who I was and he said, "Come in." But whereas it used to be a very nice apartment, today, in fact they- the… in our days people used to rent it. Now people have bought it. It's whatever they call it- *Eigentumswohnung [owner-occupied flat],* or whatever they call it. But in the flat, it was a large family and each member of the family has one room. And that is their sitting- their bedsitting room. And the only communal room is the kitchen, which they all use. So it's a- it's a bit of a mess.

*But the building looks the same?*

The building looks more or less the same, yes. It had been damaged at the top, but that has been- they've added another floor to it or replaced the floor that had knocked- been knocked off. But otherwise, yes, it's - as was. When I was there, these people I know they sent me a photograph of all the front doors of the houses that I had lived in. And I've got it here; I'll show it to you. But it is- unfortunately, when I was there the first time, the flat that we used to live in had a name plate - they all have names, not like here, just numbers- had a name. And the person who lived there at the time, was the- I've got the photograph, I don't know whether I showed it to you of carnival, with- there were four boys in- in a- dressed up as cowboys. I've still got it. And one of these cowboys was a year or so older than I, he was the son of the owner of the building, who used to live in a basement flat. He lived in the flat that we used to live in. When I came there I saw his name on the name. Pressed the bell. Unfortunately he wasn't there. Nobody in the building, so we couldn't even get in. When I came back, I made a copy of this photograph and I sent it to him and I told him I had been there but there was nobody. He never replied to me. I'm sure he- if he didn't die of a heart attack when he saw that picture, he must have been frightened out of his wits- wits, because

at the time he was wearing a Hitler Youth uniform. You know, he was a bit older. And then we weren't friends anymore of course. Originally we were friends. Then later on when he was in uniform, then I was something that you scrape from your shoes or something. So… he never replied. And when I was there the last time, it's been- all the flats have been sold now, individually. He was older than I, so maybe he isn't alive- probably isn't alive anymore.

*And which- Where was that? In which-?*

In the Wittekindstraße.

*Wittekindstraße-*

But I couldn't believe that this same man- I remember his name; it was Wilfried Wilberts. That was his name. And it was there! It was the name - on our flat! You know?

**[0:26:06]**

*So he stayed. He-*

Well obviously he moved from the basement into- it was one of his own flats when the parents died the building was his, presumably. And later on they sold off the flats and by now he would be ninety-five, ninety-six maybe. I don't know. But he isn't there anymore. But I sent him a copy of that picture.

*What- when you went there, what did you want to tell him? Or what did you think?*

I wouldn't have said anything; I would have just said "Here I am" - you know. We were never enemies. We were never- we- but of course he knew who we were and when I lived- I came to England from that address, you know. Later on, my parents were forced to move somewhere else. In fact I saw one of the- when I was there the last time, they had been moved into the centre of the town to various places. And there was an address and in fact they took me there and showed me where they had lived.

*And what was the address?*

Lochner- Lochnerstraße… wherever that is. It's also in the centre. Not far from the Roonstraße, in that general area. It's a large- a large house. It's- and apparently, two of the apartments there had been- not requisitioned, but the people who lived there had to take in other people. You know. Each room became a family room to live in. Very much like my grandfather's house in Gelsenkirchen, which became a *Judenhaus*. It means Jews were allocated to live in that house and got a room in that house.

*Yeah.*

That's what happened at the time.

*And were there other Jewish families living in Sülz? I mean… was- yes?*

Yes, there were. There were. Around the corner, several- several of- one of the boys in the same class as I at the Jawne. There were two or three others who lived in the- in the neighbourhood. In our building there was also another Jewish family. Yeah. In the- it's a bit like here in London. When my son went to Haberdashers' at the time when he was nine years old, we asked him, "Are there any other Jewish children in your class?" He didn't think so. When we checked up, nearly half of them were Jewish. I mean, you- you don't know, you know. It- it doesn't arise. It's not- it's not an issue. "You're a boy, I'm a boy, we are friends." What you do in your spare time is nobody's business.

*Yeah, so.*

Or you're not…worried about it.

**[0:28:48]**

*Did you have any bad experiences before '33? What was the relationship between - as a child - how did you-?*

I didn't- not really. I had- I never had a problem. I had some of these letters that my- that I- that I received. Not only those but my cousin in America, he tried to get family letters and he

has some letters that my mother had written to his aunt in Israel. And somehow or other he got copies of these letters. And I saw one letter where my mother writes to her sister-in-law in Israel- in Palestine, at that time. It says she wants me to add something to the letter. She says, "He's coming in." Then she writes, "He's just come in; he's gone out again." So she sent the letter without my writing anything. So I lived an independent, free life. I had my bicycle, I went everywhere. You know. The whole town was open and I had- there was a- a butcher: Max Marx in Marsilstein [area in the city centre of Cologne]. He was quite a prominent butcher; he had a very nice business there. Well, when I was in town I used to go in there and my aunt would give me a piece of sausage and a cucumber because I was probably hungry or something, then I carried on, you know. Or I went to visit my uncle who was a dentist or- because there were cousins there.

*Where was he- what was his name?*

Marx. They were all Marx.

*Aha.*

Marx was quite a large family.

*And he was a dentist where? Where was his practice?*

Off the Hohenzollernring, or not far from where the- the opera house used to be. Somewhere around there, I forget. Flandrische Straße, if you remember that. …So he had his practice there. And… the cousins were there.

*So you were part of a very big family.*

A reason- well, a fair- I mean… And I was a free spirit and I was- there were no restrictions, as far as that's concerned except, yes, I couldn't go swimming any more. That wasn't permitted. You couldn't- you were as they said, "*Juden verboten*", you know, Jews were not allowed to go into various public places. But… As a twelve year or eleven year old it didn't arise. I went where- where I went; I went to school. I was a- I belonged to the sports club which was the Hakoah in our- my case. We went to the gymnasium; we went to the sports

ground. In fact this German *Bürgermeister [mayor]*, he, I see he sends- he posts emails. Not emails. On Facebook you can see his history, what he gets up to. Among other- among other things he's gay, but that is- that's beside the point. But he was showing a place- he went to Deckstein, to the- to the running track to do his training. I said, "I used to go to Deckstein as well. We had our sports ground in Deckstein." He said, yes, I'd told, I'd mentioned it to him in, in, in Minsk and he said he'd remembered that I had told him that.

**[0:32:14]**

*Decksteiner Straße- is this-?*

No, Deckstein- it's on the outer ring road-

*Yes.*

There were all these sports grounds-

*Yes.*

- at that time: football pitches and running tracks. And we had ours; the Hakoah had its own running track. That was in 1938, certainly.

*Yes? And that was in Deckstein?*

Yes, '37, '38 I was- I used to go there once a week at least on a Sunday or whenever.

*And Hakoah was a- a Jewish sports…*

Yes. Oh, yes,

*…association?*

Like Maccabi. Maccabi- In Cologne it was called 'Hakoah', in Vienna it was "Bar Kochba", in Düsseldorf it was called 'Makkabi' but it was all- all the same organisation.

*Because Hakoah- I knew somebody who was from Bonn who did swimming for Hakoah.*

Yes, that's right. It's the same. And my- my uncle was the chairman of the Hakoah in Cologne. And so that's why he's mentioned in this book. Because it was a- yes, they were functioning- I don't know until when.

*Yeah.*

Thirty-nine? I don't know. But certainly before that, yes. I remember when I was a little- I say 'little boy', when I was eleven I suppose - eleven, twelve - they had the National Championships in Berlin. And they took me along; we went by coach from Cologne to Berlin to participate in the- in the competition in Berlin of the whole Maccabi association.

**[0:33:44]**

*When was that? How old were you, roughly?*

Eleven, twelve.

*So that must have been- it was in the 30s. It was after thirty-*

It was '37, '38. 1937 probably. After the Olympic Games, around that time. So that was- life was, for me, more or less normal. Occasionally, I remember once I was running along and another kid was running in the other direction and we [claps hands: sound] collided. And he was in a uniform- in the Nazi uniform - as obviously I wasn't. And he started to fight with me. But we had a fight and then we decided there was no profit in fighting; we went our own sweet way. But… we were children. I didn't- I was lucky I suppose, in this- again, I was lucky in that sense. I had fair hair and I had blue eyes. I didn't look particularly- I didn't stick out as being anything but normal – normal- ordinary, you know. So, my- I wasn't persecuted in that sense. I was persecuted yes, in the sense that I couldn't go swimming anymore. We weren't allowed to go swimming. But I used to go swimming- in those days they used to have swimming pools in the river. It was a ship, which had a swimming bath inside it. And

there, there was no restriction, for whatever reason. I could go there and went swimming there.

*On the Rhine?*

In the Rhine.

*So they had a swimming boat - docked?*

That's right. But I think today you wouldn't swim in the Rhine; it's polluted. In those days, it was- you could swim in it. Which was- so my life was not restricted in that sense. When I look at some of the photographs of my parents, of my father especially… he looked very poorly. You know, it- it's- obviously life was very worrying for them. Economically, probably, possibly. I don't know. Economically, I don't know. But certainly life was not… But he did- he didn't- he did, he did look poorly.

*But for you as a child-*

For me as a child…

*you didn't feel that.*

…if I wanted something, I- I got it. I wasn't very- I wasn't in great need of anything because life was …compared to my other friends we were all more or less- if I needed something or wanted something I didn't have to nag. But I- I have it in my grandchildren I suppose- are somewhat similar. My granddaughter never needed anything. My wife used to say, "You go to the toy shop and if there's something there that you like, you can have it." And she didn't. My grandson is the opposite. He wants everything. Or, he wanted everything, as a little boy. But, so, I was quite undemanding in that sense.

**[0:36:58]**

*Yeah. And what about your Jewishness? How were you brought up?*

Well I went to a Jewish school. That was the first thing. And Jawne was an Orthodox school in that sense. We had- every day we had Hebrew of some kind. Either *Ivrit,* or *chumash* or *tefillah*, Jewish history; every day we had at least one hour of that.

*But that wasn't quite by choice at that point.*

No, no. That was- that was part of schooling.

*Yes, but I mean that-*

Apart from that,

*Before…*

…we were not Orthodox. But I went to- how did I go to shul to synagogue, to Roonstraße. My father would go in- in the car and he would take me there and he'd carry on whatever he was doing.

*So Roonstraße was the Liberale synagogue?*

Yes, that's the one that we belonged to and- that's where I went.

*And you- it was- it's quite far from Sülz, I mean, it's-*

Yes. It's quite a distance so he took me by car.

*And he didn't come?*

No. He delivered me and I went. But he didn't.

*And what about your mother?*

**[0:38:00]**

My mother didn't go to synagogue; she didn't go. Although it's- it's, it's an interesting thing. The previous generation, the grandparents, they were …shul goers. The grandfather on both sides. I remember as a small boy in Gelsenkirchen on a Friday night I would also always, when I was there, accompany my grandfather; we'd go to synagogue. And I remember his people- he was a man who was known in town and people- shopkeepers would raise their hat to him as we walked past. I can still see – see it in my mind's eye how- but it was- he used to wear his bowler hat and we walked to synagogue which was not that far away. But it was quite a regular occurrence.

*In Gelsenkirchen?*

In Gelsenkirchen. My- the other grandfather I didn't know.

*So that was an Orthodox synagogue probably, or- in Gelsenkirchen?*

Yes, and also an Orthodox synagogue.

*Yes.*

I don't know whether there were several. I don't know. But- and I think it was rebuilt, actually. It's also- also rebuilt as, as, as Roonstraße. And the Roonstraße synagogue, when I saw it again, looks as it did when I was Bar Mitzvah there. The same building. Now, I- I told you briefly about this doctor who was- who came from Israel, became a doctor in Cologne. He was also Bar Mitzvah in Cologne. And when we communicated, this is the strange thing- both our mothers were in Auschwitz. Your uncle was my teacher, and we were both Bar Mitzvah in the same place, a few years apart. So, it's un- quite incredible.

*So, the grandparents were more religious than your parents?*

Yes. Well, it's quite-

*Yeah.*

It's the normal. It's what happened everywhere.

*Yeah.*

Because what was happening in Germany 50-100 years ago, is happening here today. Intermarriage …and everything else. Assimilation. All this is…

**[0:40:16]**

*How did your parents meet? Do you know how they met?*

No. No. It's probably in Cologne because my father was in an allied business. And she was in the… in the, in the… the working for this Hirsch which was – what were they? Haute couture.

*Haute couture. Tell us what your mother was doing there.*

Well, I don't know, I think- well, she was- she was the rebel in the family. Again, interesting where at that time they- the norm was in the middle-class Jewish family, once children had their education, the daughters were sent to finishing school. To Switzerland or to Wiesbaden or wherever they went. That's what- what- that was the acceptable thing. And my mother was the youngest, and she refused! She didn't want that. She was- she had certain talents and she found herself this job with this company in Cologne. I don't quite know how this happened. But anyway, she became a dress designer for a well-known company - I mean a known company. She was at that time, so I'm told, they had one section- one was in Cologne the other one was in Paris. [*Hirsch & Cie*] It was an international company in that field. So it's possible that they met because of that connection; I don't know. It was after the war. My father had been in the German Army which- all the- all the boys were in the Army. His two brothers were in the Army, his three brothers. And the younger one who actually – the dentist – he was- they were, father and his younger brother, were in, on the eastern front and my- the younger one was on the western front. And he was taken prisoner by the British actually. He was in a prisoner of war camp in England for a short while.

*Your uncle?*

In the First World War, yes. So- but that's what happened.

*Yeah.*

People did what we would have done here, the same thing. There's a time, there's a war, you're called up in the Army, you become a soldier.

*So, when did your parents marry? Do you know? When did they get married?*

**[0:42:42]**

I don't- I've got their marriage- I don't actually know.

*And where did they get married?*

Probably in Gelsenkirchen – I should imagine.

*Yeah.*

Because they- but I- I don't know. In fact, what- I must have another look at those. I've got – we went to Gelsenkirchen. I didn't know too much. I didn't have many details. For instance, I had a photograph of my great-grandmother, but I didn't know her name. And when we were in Gelsenkirchen, I said, "How can I find out?" And then I went to the local registry office. And I said, "I want to have these family details." And they went into the archives and brought back these great big ledgers from the 1800s; they were there, all hand-written. And there was my parents' marriage certificate. My mother's birth certificate. Marriage certificate. And on the marriage certificate was the name and handwriting of my great-grandmother. She had signed her name and that's where I discovered what her name had been.

*What was it?*

[Half-laughing] I can't remember… But… I, I can look it up at home … got it …. But… It was some German-sounding name.

*Yeah.*

But… She was a Rubens, you know, that was her name but… And then the other interesting- The strangest – the strangest thing happened. I had a good friend. He got- had a girlfriend. And his girlfriend said, "In our building there's a lady, she says she's related to you." I say, "I haven't got any relatives here."

**[0:44:28]**

*In England?*

Pardon?

*In England?*

Here, yes. We- we- he lived in Willesden Green at the time. I shared a flat with a friend of mine and they lived around the corner. I says, "I have no relatives here." He says, "No she is quite sure." So- so we met her. She was my mother's first cousin. That means her mother and my grandmother were sisters. And I knew the other sister as well. So we met here. Well, she had married- he was not Jewish. He came from Danzig originally. And they got married in England before the war, cause you couldn't get married in Germany anymore because of the laws. They came to England to get married. Went back to Germany. Had a business in Konstanz and I'd never met them. Nothing. Had no idea even that they existed. But she had remembered something and- or she heard the name. Anyway, so I met them again. I met them for the first time here in London. So this is- these are all odd things that happened. I met another cousin of my father's. Because I was a member of the- when I came back to London, I looked for a social club of some sort and I found- eventually I found *Maccabi Bar Kochba* in Eton Avenue. And in the basement was a restaurant. In the- this large building [57 Eton Avenue, NW3] there were all kinds of organisations like *Habonim* and *Poalei HaZion* and they all had a room in the house. All these various…We had a room there as well; we used to play table tennis. And the restaurant was in the basement. And I used to eat there, because it was my kind of food, you know. And I was there- most days I used to go- after work I went to eat there. And one day a lady in the kitchen or the owner, whoever, asked one of the waitresses, "Ask this young man whether his name is Marx." And they said, "No, he's one of

the boys from upstairs; he always comes to eat here." Anyway, they asked. I said, "Yes, it is." She recognised me. She knew my father when he was a young man. So I met another member of the family. So it's… very strange how things happen.

**[0:47:08]**

*So, let us go back to Cologne a little bit and Roonstraße.*

I get…

*No, that's fine. Let's just go back to Roonstraße-*

Roonstraße-

*… because I'm interested in it. That's the synagogue I grew up in-*

Yes?

*And of course, at-*

When I was, when I was there, it was- didn't have two floors. It was just one big synagogue. It was huge. I mean it's- it's the same shape.

*Oh, there wasn't a basement?*

But the basement-

*The basement wasn't there?*

The basement now, was the synagogue floor. And the rest was this huge building.

*Right.*

So, as a little boy, you can imagine, there were lots of stairs going up to the- to the- where the *Aron Hakodesh* [the Ark] is.

*Yeah?*

So, it was a long way up.

*Because when I grew- I went to nursery in there and you know, the youth club was downstairs.*

That's right.

*But of course, when we grew up, we- it was- it was an Orthodox synagogue. And I would say we had no awareness what it was before the war. It was- at that point we- nobody talked about it; we didn't know.*

But that's- it was- it was- it- in fact when I saw the outside, I couldn't believe it! It was the same as I remembered it. But it has the two- they put in this extra floor. The- the basement, which is now the basement was then the, the well of the synagogue.

**[0:48:34]**

*They put in a restaurant and… it's on the first floor.*

And now it's been changed, apparently. There is a new restaurant there now. The previous ones didn't make it. I don't know what, because, of course this Larissa , they know all about it. They told me last week that there's a new restaurant there now. It's- they have- They do parties and so on. But it's the only kosher restaurant in town, so...

*And you had your Bar Mitzvah in Roonstraße?*

Yes.

*So tell us a little bit about that. What do you remember?*

Not- not all that much. We had a Rabbi Dr [Adolph] Kober, he was the rabbi at the time. He was a- to me a very stern and angry man. Although I don't know whether he was or not. But I had to go to him; I had learned my bit. There was a teacher who… taught me my *parashah*. Unfortunately, they did it parrot fashion. He sang a sentence; I had to repeat it. And eventually I, I knew it all. And whereas nowadays they teach them the actual music so you can perform- you can read everything. And we never learnt it that way, which was, which was a shame really. That's- would have been just as easy to teach us that way than the other way.

*Which year? Which year was it?*

19- a year before- 1938. September '38. A year before Kristallnacht. And I think in '38- no, what am I talking about? No, I was a Bar Mitzvah in 193 - 8. In September '38. November was Kristallnacht, two months later. And in August I think, or October, either before or just after, the children were sent out- the Polish-born children were sent to Szbaszyn [Poland]. So this half - not half - quite a large number of children who had been in school, were- had- were missing by then.

*You remember that? That children left?*

Yes, oh, yes.

*So these are the children whose parents didn't have German citizenship?*

That's right.

*Yeah.*

And all those that had- they were- a large number were there without- who were stateless. They were sent away. And some of those actually came to join us in London in the hostel, also with Kindertransport, at that same time.

**[0:51:16]**

*When you had the Bar Mitzvah there was- it wasn't probably allowed to have a big group-gatherings at that time.*

I don't know. In those days you didn't have- a Bar Mitzvah was a, a- a family affair. I remember in our case, all the family came to our apartment, to our flat in- and my aunt in- the butcher in Marsilstein she had- they had a- a cook. And this lady came to our house a day before and did all the cooking, all the preparation for this big party we had. And all - not all, but - most of my uncles and aunts were there for my Bar Mitzvah.

*That's extraordinary that you had a Bar Mitzvah in 1938.*

Yeah. So that was sort of the last- the last happening. And everybody was busy with emigration. Some had gone already. Some were trying. My parents were trying. They had all the papers to go to America. But there was a quota system. And they had a quota number, I can't tell now what it was. Anyway, it hadn't been called. Friends of mine up the road, they had an earlier quota number and they finished up in America. They were overtaken by the war. So they didn't- they had… Had- everything was- they were just waiting for their number to be called. Because at that time, when one thinks back and when one- you know what's actually happened. It wasn't so difficult to get out of Germany. It was difficult to get in somewhere.

*Yeah.*

Unless you had a visa or had a permit you couldn't- they couldn't come to England. They couldn't go to America because they had a… quota. Some managed to go to South America. Some went to Palestine. But in the whole, really the world was basically closed. One place you could get to was to Hong Kong- no, no, to Shanghai. That was an open area. But not everybody did or could. I don't know. Or…and nobody expected war to break out as quickly as it did.

*And when do you remember was emigration talked about? Or in, the family- do you remember any-?*

**[0:53:46]**

I knew they had- I knew they had all the papers and I knew they had applied, and I knew they had a quota number. And that's what was the plan. Says, "You'll go to America- to England. And when we go to America you come with us." And the boy I shared the bed with for a while, his parents actually went to the States. And some time- we got to Bedford in August. I think the following January, or February, he went off to America. Joined his parents. So this was… the expected thing to happen. So it, it wasn't- you weren't torn away one day and that was the end. It wasn't. For instance, my parents were going to- had arranged to phone me for my birthday, which was the 31st of August. Well, by that date we were already evacuated. So they couldn't phone anymore because we weren't in the hostel. So that phone call never came. So- but I still got messages via the Red Cross like this one that you've- I showed you. That's the last one I have and that's the one I kept. So, when- when one, when one talks about this, some of the children, yes, they were very small. But as far as we were concerned at the time it wasn't- it was almost a holiday to come here, as a group. Like a school holiday we came to London and we had new experiences. And we used to communicate. Not so much. We were forced to sit down once a week to write home. And I have letters here which one regrets afterwards of course. I get a letter from my parents: "We haven't heard from you. Mrs. Katz heard from her son, why haven't we heard from you? And he says he hasn't got…" - something or other - "Are you all right? Have you got enough to wear?" You know, they were concerned with things that didn't bother a child.

*Yeah.*

**[0:55:53]**

Most of those that wrote, were complaining.

*Well, that's in the nature of things, isn't it?*

You see? Mostly- so, they of course communicated to their- other parents. And they all worried. "He complains." "Why doesn't ours write? What's- what's wrong?"

*But you were in a group. I mean that's very important isn't it?*

That’s right. We were- we were together.

*And maybe slightly different from the other Kindertransport children.*

I’m sure. I’m sure.

*Because you came-*

That’s right. But that was the immediate…

*Yes-*

But then, within a few months…

*Yes.*

…We, we- we had the same- similar experience; we were then with strangers. Some had very good experiences with strangers, some had terrible experiences. I know one of the boys- one of our boys who was also evacuated to Bedford. He also went to school, and he couldn’t get into the house until the owner came home. So he used to sit on the doorstep until they came home in the evening. Didn’t happen with us. In our case, many English small country houses- people were, they weren’t- they were working, but they were relatively poor. You wanted to get into their house, you put your fingers through the letterbox and the key to the front door was on a string. And you pulled it out and opened the door, went in. It wasn’t- it was closed but it wasn’t; you could get into the house, because you could. But with other people that wasn’t the case. And they had horrendous stories… how ill-treated, how they were neglected by the people. They shouldn’t have taken a child if they can’t look after it.

*Yeah.*

But the people I was with- one day he came home, he says, “Would you like a bicycle?” Would I like a bicycle? Of course! He says well, he’s found an old frame, ladies’ frame- old,

ancient. Brought it home. Found two wheels, found a saddle, found an old lamp and he put it all together. And I was- a king! I had a bicycle! You know? This is how it was.

*Kurt just to take you back, I know we will come to England. Just- your schooling. You changed- You were in a- just an ordinary primary school.*

**[0:58:24]**

Went to the primary school then we went to Jawne.

*From that to a Jewish primary school?*

Jewish primary school, that was the Lützowstraße, the only primary school in Cologne. The majority of Jewish children went to that school. One or two for some reason or other, didn't, whether the headmaster or whether the school was- I don't know- had different ideas or whether it didn't comply with the rules, I don't know.

*And then most of the people from Lützowstraße went to Jawne?*

No, no - no.

*No? Where did the other- Where did they go?*

Only those that- I think the parents had to pay. And you had to have a certain standard. So the two, or the combination of the two, you- the standard was… high enough and… it has to be paid for. It was a private-

*Was it a private- It was a private school?*

It was- it wasn't supported. It was supported a little bit by the Jewish community- the- Ja- Jawne. But in the main it was a school that had to be paid for.

*So it was a private gymnasium?*

Yes.

*And when was it founded, this- the Jawne school? Do you know*?

Oh, it had been around for quite a long time. It had been smaller and more orthodox originally. And the Jewish community- the children went to the local grammar schools, wherever they were. I remember my cousin in New- America went to Kreuzgasse, whatever the- there was a-

*Yeah, I know Kreuzgasse- Kreuz Gymnasium.*

It was a *Gymnasium*, that's right. That was already- it was already in existence then and that was one of the schools they went to. Of course that didn't exist anymore so most of them- and Jawne, people came from all over the… west Germany.

*Yes. And where was- where was Jawne? Where was the school?*

**[1:00:12]**

The school was in the- the street was Sankt-Albert- Sankt-Apern-Straße. Where? Again in the centre of town. Near the Hahnentor –

*Yeah.*

- in that general area.

*Was it a boarding school? You said people…*

No.

*No? Because you said people came from other parts…*

Oh, yes. They came from- from all over west Germany.

*So they had to find some lodging?*

Well, they must have been lodging with people. I don't know. It wasn't a boarding school.

*No.*

It was a day school.

*And what was the idea? Was it to give a religious* <u>and</u> *secular education, or was it-?*

Yes, yes. Yes. Classical. It was basically a classical education.

*So, Latin and Greek?*

Originally we started with Latin. In my time, our- we were the first ones to start with English because of possible emigration. And then we started- we got Latin afterwards. So English was our first language. Then we added Latin to it. Others originally had French and Latin but they dropped French and it became English. So we were the first children who in their early days had English. That was one of the decisions, because we had English they sent us first.

*So they already were prepared in some way? Or, emigration was-*

In some way- yes, yes of course. The situation was that, one English teacher – 'English' English – he came from England and yes we learned English. Sort of. It's surprising how… little one learns in the early days of school. But at the same time you get a background of grammar which… is helpful later on.

*Yeah.*

So, yes we- that was- and then… he approached the parents. And they sent- I've got it somewhere, where he's trying to persuade the parents to allow the children to come. And many said no. One knows that now.

*This was the head- the headmaster?*

Yes. Klibansky, who was a relatively young- young headmaster. And one of the teachers at the school may - I don't really heard of her – Feo [Feodore] Kahn?

*Yes.*

Well, her name was 'Joseph' originally and she got married to a Kahn. She was the teacher at school. I knew her as a teacher. Oh but she was also… friends- a friend of the family of the younger generation. And she lived here in Wembley. She died a couple of years ago. She was 105 [1909-2015]. And she had been this teacher at the school. And whenever I was in Wembley in that area I used to give her a phone call. I says, "Are you at home? Are you receiving?" She never said no. I used to pop in occasionally to say hello to her.

[01:03:20]

*There was another lady actually in my neighbourhood who we knew, in Belsize Park, who . was a sports teacher at the Jawne. Her name was Mrs. Schuster, but that was her married name. She came a bit- a few years before.*

I don't know her… I- I didn't know the- who was…We didn't have- They didn't have very much sport or anything at the school of any kind. I don't know why. But there wasn't enough time for that.

*Yeah. But Kurt, you said so your life in a way was not interrupted. You went to private school at secondary school. What about your father and his profession? And how did it impact him?*

Again as I said he- he was in the men's- menswear business. He had been- we- we had a family who had a large store in Cologne, just men's - outfitters. And he was their manager at one time. In fact I went, when I was there recently, I went for a walk down the Hohe Straße and off- there is a road called Brückenstraße. I don't know whether you know it.

*Yeah?*

And I remembered the number - Number 17. There is 17 and I took a photo of it. That's where the business- he had a very large store, I remember. That was my-

*What was the name of the business?*

Rubens and Company, but it’s years ago, you know,

*Yeah- yeah.*

…when I was a little boy it was still there. And he- the uncle retired and one son became a lawyer went to South Africa. The other son… I don’t know what. He was a tennis… He was a playboy. But…

[01:05:07]

*So that's where your father worked?*

Long before my time.

*Right?*

And later on he- he had the main representation for the whole country of this particular company which was a big job.

*Which was making rainbows, you said?*

Raincoats.

*Raincoats.*

And… We had a very large motorcar at that time. And later on, during this Nazi period, presumably either the business was taken over or else they dismissed the senior people within the company. I don't know which. And then he had his- he had his own kind of a wholesale representation. I'm not quite sure. So he was still- we still had our car.

*He managed- he had customers so-*

Oh, yes. Obviously he must have done. Sometimes I used to go- he used to visit his customers and I used to go with him in the whole general area. We used to go to Wuppertal. It was the centre of the textile business… and so on. So, but … But then as I said my mother taught ladies how to- how to earn a living.

*Tell us about it. What happened?*

Well when people thought of emigrating- people started to think “well if we emigrate to wherever we don't speak the language. And we haven't really learned a profession.” They were ladies of leisure. But anyway, they were busy people, you know, what with charity and God knows what. So they came to our house. And I remember our dining room - large dining room - she had two electric sewing machines. That's how I learned how to- use- I used to love to play with those machines, which I wasn't supposed to. But I knew I- I could. I could work it probably better than some of the ladies she had. But anyway, they learned, they came to her every- they, they came after I went to school and they were gone already. But the debris was still there. And yes, I know- in fact, my aunt who was- came to England, because my uncle the dentist came here to go to Palestine. He had a certificate. But then war broke out and they stayed here. Or, had to stay here. Couldn't go there.

[01:07:35]

But she had to… You had to earn a living. And she was a finisher in a gun manufacturer’s business. So the finisher apparently had to be very skilful to… And she had- that's where she- that's how she knew it because she had learned how to do it. And there were quite a number of ladies; I don't know how many she had. So that was- not only was she teaching but she also had her own income. Obviously she- they had to- had to pay to learn. So it disrupted everybody's life. But… Parents tended to protect the children. And… Yes, I went to school, I had my- my homework to do, and my leisure activities whatever they were with my school friends or with the- with the youth organizations we had. There were three- in fact two; I belonged to the Hakoah, which was the sports club and we had a place called Maccabi Hatzair which was the kind of a- you could call it a ‘Jewish Scouting organization’ - something like that. We used to go… marching along - we went to the *Siebengebirge* [Seven

Mountains are a hill range of the German Central Uplands on the east bank of the Middle Rhine, southeast of Bonn] - and go up the mountains and this sort of thing. But it was a- it was a… a social- but we were young. We were only what, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen… was quite inaudible.

*And what sort of friends? Did you have mostly Jewish friends? I mean, later…*

Mainly. Well, school friends.

*Yeah.*

Who did you go to school with? Yes, as I said, I had the one who I, as neighbours- we were friends. We were- as I say, I've got a photograph of the four of us. We were … cowboys. We went into town carnival [Cologne is a famous centre of carnival in Germany] and made a nuisance of ourselves.

*Yes?*

But… So, yes. You were- you- you played with the local children, whatever it was. But then… You become involved in your… organization that you are in. There, I had my friends.

[01:10:03]

*Yes. Not by choice. I mean that by…*

It happens, you know. It- it wasn't a question of rejecting one or taking the other. You were with these together. I remember… two of them. Two of the boys I used to compete with, were both in New York. And… my aunt who was the butcher's wife – she'd emigrated. Eventually they go to the States and left Germany in 1941 I think, via France and Portugal. They were in Cuba for a while and eventually they got to America. And she had her ninetieth birthday. And there was this young boy I used to compete with, whatever his name was. And we met again. Yes he, of course he remembered… our… time when we were twelve or eleven-year-olds. But the- the other one - there were three of us - and the other one I - never managed to get hold of him. Some of them did extraordinarily well - here and in the States.

Unbelievable. One of the- I've got a photo of – Schild. Have you heard of Rolf Schild? Well he was one of our boys. Our parents were good friends. And he became one of the richest men in the country. But nobody gave it to him. It was pure- he went to Regent Street Polytechnic when I was there although he was a little bit older. He had- his education had advanced far enough for him to continue. Became a… electronics engineer… and had a very large business. Among other things he got involved with an iron lung. I think he invented something or other people were- then he had a very large business. Huntleigh – Huntleigh Industries, or something [Huntleigh Technology, Luton]. And I remember- unfortunately I haven't- somehow or other it got lost. He was the fifty-sixth richest man in this country, at one stage.

*And he came- he was at Jawne?*

[01:12:26]

He was at Jawne. He was, as I said, eighteen months older than I. And I remember when he went to the Regent Street Poly and- and I used to go there. And he- he invented something and he- he sold the first business to General Electric I think for millions. But he couldn't be-sit still. He started another business and they hired out hospital equipment. Special beds and all kinds of hospital equipment which they used- hospital that needed specialist beds but they didn't have the space. And he- he was manufacturing them and they hired them for a week or two or three or however long they needed. And then it went back to them. And when my wife was in hospital I said, "Good Lord. That is some of his equipment that they were…" In fact, the special bed which had these special mattresses and all sorts of electronics attached to it, came from his company. Well, he died a few years ago. And he was also, I don't know whether you remember that, he was kidnapped. Did you know that? His name was Rolf Schild. And they lived in Hend- in the Garden Suburb. And he and his wife and daughter went to Sardinia on holiday many years ago. They were kidnapped by the bandits in Sardinia. The whole family. They were kept it in the mountains. Disappeared. Eventually, after some months they released him and kept the wife and child. And I remember the pictures on the news him coming out getting back wherever. They thought his name was Rothschild, and they expected there- well he was a rich man, because where he lived you couldn't be poor in that part of Sardinia. And… what ransom he paid to get his wife and daughter out again, were never discovered. That was… another story. Amazing.

*Another story. Yeah.*

But he financed the Corbachs... [referring to Dieter Corbach book, Die Jawne zu Köln: zur Geschichte des ersten jüdischen Gymnasiums im Rheinland und zum Gedächtnis an Erich Klibansky, 1900–1942. Scriba, Köln, 1990. ISBN 978-3-921232-42-2]

[Sound break]

*Yeah. So, just to come back to your time-*

Can you remember what-?

[01:15:00]

*Yes I remember; we were talking about Rolf Schild. But we are going- we'll just go back- we go back to pre- pre-emigration.*

Yes. Yes.

*What about Kristallnacht? Where were you?*

Well Kristallnacht was in a way- yes, it's- I went to school as normal on my bike. On the corner of our street was a- a- the toy shop. Which was there until fairly recently, strangely enough. It's been a toy shop all these years. Only recently has it been changed. When I came out, there was a- one of the glass windows- one of the windows had been smashed. Which- well it could have been an accident. I don't know. I saw it. And there was- used to be a game called- English it's called Ludo – "*Mensch ärgere dich nicht"*. And there was this thing flapping in the wind and it says: "*Mensch ärgere dich nicht*." But I- I could still see it. Anyway, I carried on to school. When I get to school, go- commotion, smoke coming out of the building, teacher outside the school, "No school today." Didn't know why. "Go home." And- whatever. Well, you didn't have to tell a boy twice, "Go home. No school." Wasn't such a pleasure for me, you know, that's always- a day off is very good. So I thought, well, before I go home I'll go and visit my uncle the butcher, you know, which is not very far from there.

When I get there - completely destroyed. Windows smashed, inside there was a large shop with ma- all marble - smashed to small pieces. And then suddenly I said first the shop on the corner where we lived, then the school, now this. There’s something obviously wrong somewhere. You didn't have a mobile phone to phone home. So it took me a half an hour to get back home from there. Got on the bike. Went home. When I get home told my mother. “Your father isn't at home.” He had been warned the night before by friends. They had- “Don’t stay at home tonight. There’s going to be- something is going to happen.” They couldn't tell him what or didn't. So he had- had not been home. I had- wasn't aware of that. And that's how- then phoned around my uncle's, the dentist’s, his place was smashed up. I mean, we were- we were ordinary people, you know. We didn't- weren’t prominent in any particular way. Didn't have a shop or something. So, and where we lived strangely enough next door to us - I have a memory - there was one of the… S- SA or something - offices on the corner of the street so in all probability that stopped them from doing anything to the houses immediately next door to them.

[01:18:11]

Wouldn't be, you know, as I say it was spontaneous to people, so it wasn't considered an official happening. So… phone- my mother phoned, presumably phoned everybody to find out what was all right. Everybody- everybody was all right; nobody was hurt or anything. I think one of the uncles was arrested for a couple of days. But he wasn't sent away. He was well connected. This was the butcher. And… he knew somebody who knew somebody and he was home again. So nothing happened to him. So in- in the immediate family nobody got hurt in that sense. That's- and I don't know how much later we went back to school.

*And did you see a synagogue? They synagogues burnt?*

Yes, of course. The synagogue- Roonstraße was- all- I mean, we had a little synagogue at the school and that was- that was- had been-

*That's what was burning.*

That was burning. But at the school they’d thrown out all the desks and all the- any- and I remember it was wet at times or all the stuff was in- and around- now outside the school

there's this little spot, I mean I've seen it, which had a great big tree on it - a chestnut tree. At that time. When we went back again of course now it's all been rebuilt and built up but it’s still this small place which is called the [Erich-] Klibansky-Platz. And I've got a photograph of a friend of mine- in America- he’s- he’s not alive anymore. We had a photograph taken out in front of this chestnut tree. The next time I came tree is gone. The tree had been cut down because it had died but that was the original tree from- we remembered the old chestnut tree outside the school.

*But, so, that- the school was under attack. I mean that was a big target.*

[01:20:16]

Oh, yes. That's right. Well, we were- but they cleaned it up and we went back to school. But short- then this was- don’t forget, this was in November. And then Klibansky started, and December, January we were gone. So, it was amazing that in a matter of weeks he managed to organize us to leave, to organize the parents to do whatever they had to do, to prepare: what to take, what not to take.

*Can I just ask you, the Kristallnacht, where- where was this butcher? Where was it? Where was the butcher?*

Marsilstein, not far from the Neumarkt.

*Maselstein?*

Marsilstein. Around the corner, there’s Neumarkt and Marsilstein is just off it.

*So right in the centre?*

Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes it was I mean- they owned that whole building. It seemed very large when I saw it. Now, it's not such a- it's a tallish building but it's not as… wide, but it had a great big gate next to it where they had the factory, sort of, where they were making sausages at the back. And I went through there. And yes, there's a lot of buildings there now. It’s built up. But it must have been quite a large property.

*So they must have been very well known, I mean, to have a butcher's shop in the centre of-*

Oh, yes, he was- he was known everywhere. His advert was always a big 'M'- 'Max Marx Marsilstein'. You know, the-

*His name was Max Marx?*

Yes. Yes he was a- and in those days I mean- I've got- somebody gave me the book… …This one here. This is about the other butcher in town.

*Just hold it, and we can see it.*

The other butcher in Cologne, which was called 'Katz-Rosenthal'. So Katz, this Michael Katz and my cousin who went to New York, Harry Marx, were good friends. They were both sons of butchers and they had both served their apprenticeship as butchers to take over father's business eventually. Now, they both came to London. Harry went off- carried on to America and Michael Katz stayed here. And he became the largest – eventually - the largest meat packer in this country.

*And here, Katz-Rosenthal, what does it say? Ehrenstraße 86?*

Oh, they had lots of businesses. They had quite a- I didn't- there's a whole family… a whole family-

*Yeah, we'll look at it later. If you-*

Yeah. So it's- so. They were- they had a very big business.

*So, was it traumatic for you, Kristallnacht? I mean did it come as a shock or how, how- as a child? How did you- Or you-?*

Not really. It's… There was only a very short time between its happening, but… personally I didn't - apart from the bit- bits of school that we missed and I don't even know what happened

to my uncle's business anymore. Somehow it is not in my memory at all. Whether it was repaired or whether it continued or what happened afterwards.

*Yeah.*

I don't know. Then it came to this immigration and then-

*It was very quick afterwards.*

It all happened very quickly.

*And you remembered it. Did your parents discuss with you the- the fact that you were leaving? Was that discussed or was it-?*

Not really. Discussed to the extent, "You'll go and we'll- we'll carry on when we can when we go to America, you come with us." That was- that was it. You know. It wasn't- it wasn't a trauma in that sense.

*Yeah.*

It wasn't horrendous that I had to leave home. I didn't leave home; I went away for a short while.

*Yes. And you were also old enough…*

Yes.

*… to be able to.*

I was instantly- I was. Apparently I was very independent at the time. I did my own thing. I- I was busy. I-

*But you said other parents didn't allow their children to go?*

[01:25:00]

No. they said, “No, no, our children stay with us. If we go, we go together…”, you know. People have different ideas. We- nobody in their wildest dreams who could have imagined what actually happened or how it happened. I used to- we have- I still have letters where my grandmother writes… It was already during the war, because we used to get letters- I had a- there was a cousin in Holland, so before Holland was overrun, letters- parents would write to Holland, Holland would send it on to England - and reverse. My grandmother writes in one of the letters, all the men by then were living in Poll at the- in the old- in the home. They were all working in the *Königsforst* [forested area east of Cologne], in the, in the, in the woods. Cutting trees. I don't know what. She says, “Well…” She says something to the effect, “The outdoor life is not so bad for them.” You know. So they were still functioning; put it this way.

*Yeah.*

But it- one- one had no- no idea. So that they were deprived, on the one hand, of their occupation but they were-

*Doing something.*

Well. Well they were. It was directed labour. Same as with my wife when she was in Hamburg. They were- she- for a while, she worked in a fish processing factory.

*Yeah - forced labour. Yeah.*

That's right.

*But... Do you know how Klibansky- they must have worked with the Kindertransport movement. Or, how-?*

I know he came with us and he came backwards and forwards. He came to London. He came to see us. Then another group came and he would- but it all happened in a relatively short time from January, February- in a few months, everything-

*But-*

We were occupied of course. We were busy. We- so time went very quickly.

*Did he find sponsors do you think? I mean you said- what- the synagogue…*

Well in this case he must have found a Walm Lane synagogue – you know.

*Do you think he-?*

I don't know. I don't know how this happened.

*Yeah.*

…You see, because it was ostensibly a religious school- so the religious community would then sponsor the children, you know, I should imagine. I could imagine. I don't know. And I remember the rabbi of the synagogue, he was a lovely fellow.

[sound break]

[01:27:36]

*Wait- we are just- wait. We are in England, still. So in that time from November to your leaving…*

Yeah?

*What- what do you remember?*

I don't- very- very little. There was nothing of consequence happened.

*What could you take? What were you allowed to take with you?*

Oh we- we were- we- we still took a lot of stuff with us. Among other things, my bicycle. My bicycle came with me. My bed came with me.

*How could you do that. How was that possible?*

The- it was organised. They trans- they- in fact the idea was, that we'd take enough furniture with us to have sufficient furniture in the hostel, for us to live in. That was happening.

*So the school- the school rented a compartment- so the school sent with the children-*

I don't know- I don't know how this happened.

*Did you have your own bicycle when you arrived in England?*

Yes!

*I've never heard that.*

I, I- I can show you a picture.

*No, I know- I believe you, but it- that means it must have been a special- it must have been a Jawne school...*

Maybe they organized-

*Organised something-*

Organized something that we could take- and the parents-

*A container, maybe.*

Maybe. The parents sent stuff out, again with the idea: whatever we send out, we've got - you know. So there was a bell. There was a cupboard. There was something else. That was my bicycle. All sorts of stuff. Bed linen, all kind... I never had…And apart from the bicycle

which I insisted on it was all put into a store in Cricklewood somewhere because the house was furnished and we got there. There was no need for the stuff that we brought. And then during the war it was bombed so the whole load disappeared except for the bicycle which I had in the hostel still. And I don't think somebody decided there was a good bicycle and they kept it. I never I never got it. I had it whilst I was in London. Because I've got a photograph of me sitting on the bicycle one of the boys standing next to me.

*So I assume they must have said the shipment…*

I have to admit they must have had some sort of transportation of the goods that we could still take and we did take with us. We brought them here and blankets and eiderdown and all sorts of stuff. The blanket I've still got.

*From that?*

[01:30:13]

Well I don’t know where it is at the moment…[Bea asks something]camel hair, a camel hair blanket.

Only the best would do this. Oh dear! Yes, that’s…and people help themselves and then there was the war on then there was the… It was bombed and lot of stuff… was destroyed. Because I remember going with a rabbi to the store to get something and the bed fell on my big toe and smashed it. So he picked me up took me to the doctor, hospital I don't know forget where he took me. I met him years later. I thought he was at home where he was quite a short man. This period is…It's. It didn't make much of an impression. The period between my Bar Mitzvah and our coming here … there wasn't much time and everything was…I don’t know.

*But was school still going on after Kristallnacht?*

It was closed. I don't know when it was closed down because I read somewhere… can't quite remember. There was a, a Kinderheim, an orphanage, opposite the Lützowstraße school actually. And eventually that was closed and all these children that moved into the Jawne

School. So there was very little space and the school was closed down. I'm not quite sure of the timing. Sometime between 1939 and 1940- but Klibansky lived, still lived in the building of the school. He moved from away from where he had lived and then he and his wife and children moved into one or two rooms at the school.

*And how often did he travel to England.*

I don't know, I don't know…

*How many how many…*

We saw him a couple of times maybe.

*But how many journeys did he take?.*

I don't know, I've no idea if he came. He didn't come with us to London. At the time. One of the teachers he was a young rabbi, Seligsohn. He'd been the rabbi in Bonn.

[01:32:00]

He was a classical scholar. He used to teach us Latin. He was a Hebrew scholar. Relatively young man. Completely unsuitable to look after children. Had no- no idea at all how to communicate or how to deal with children. His wife was not so bad. But this was only a short while. And he- then when the time came he joined the British Army and he died. He had a tumour on the brain and he- I don't think he ever saw any service. He died quite- also quite a young man. There were two young German rabbis who were expected to be- or do great things. That was Seligsohn and- [Werner] Van der Zyl: he was the other young- young up-and-coming rabbi in the, in- in, in Germany at the time. And Seligsohn came with us; that's why they sent him because it was- great things were expected from him.

Right. So Klibansky didn't come?

No.

And you said you came on the first- that was the first-

First one from the school, yes. I had a cousin - second cousin. He was- came with the last one probably in June or July. June 1940- 1939. He was one of the younger ones and they were- I don't know how many- maybe twenty of them altogether, went to Brighton. So they were there.

*So was it by class? Was a whole class taken, or-?*

Not a whole. I suppose they got a group together of- of people. Where the parents agreed- Where the parents could afford. I don't know whether it was a very costly thing to do. I'm sure they had to pay for - whatever. But anyway, as I said those of us who came here we were- we were the lucky ones. And of those that came, there are still… two others in London and one in Cardiff. One of our boys is in Cardiff. Well, we are all the same age. One lives in Greenford and one lives in Golders Green. We don't see each other. The one in Greenford I see from time to time. He tends to write in the- in the AJR magazine. His name is Ernest Kolman [formerly Ernst Kohlmann]; I don't know whether you have ever seen his name.

Yeah.

He always complains about something or other. And he's comp- he’s complained all his life. The first complaint is in that book I've got there- The Jawne, where he writes about the hard time he had here when he came here. He was one of those who caused panic among the parents when he wrote home.

*Aha, you said.*

His life was always terrible. He always saw the worst in everything and everybody, he blames everybody for everything. Even today…

[01:35:21]

*So did people stay in touch of the original group- of the Jawne?*

Well, we- the- the three of us. Well actually there is a lady upstairs. She was in the class above us in the Jawne. And eventually she came and- bought the flat upstairs. And yes well I knew her from way back you know, but-

*And she's here?*

She lives here.

*Well that's…*

Yeah. She lives upstairs.

*Okay.*

So.

*There we are, Kurt. So what I suggest now is that we have a break. And then we will start from your journey.*

OK.

*And leaving Cologne. Okay?*

Yeah.

[Audio break]

[01:36:02]

*Kurt, we were- we reached the time just before you are leaving Cologne.*

Yeah.

*So if you could set the scene for us about…*

Well, I- it's interesting; there are certain gaps that I can't- I can't… visualise it anymore. I can't remember it. I know we must have got to the station. Whether we went by car- Probably. Possibly. I don't know. Or we went- all went together? Probably not. It's interesting, there are certain things I- I can't- I only know we were at the station. And the- and they had said to the parents, "Say goodbye at home. Don't come to the station." Of course everybody came to the station. And we got onto the train. And… quite happily, you know, we waved goodbye- but what they were thinking is perhaps something else. But even their expectation was to see us a month, two, three - who knows. We would go together. So it wasn't a sad parting. You know: 'never see you again'. It wasn't that sort of situation - not at that time. So then we were on the train… which was fine. The only funny thing was, when the Dutch people- the Dutch border control came, and their German was funny, you know, a 'Dutch' kind of German. And we thought it was the funniest thing ever when he asked us whether we had anything to declare. But then… when we- once we got into Holland and… suddenly the SA or SA, SS- somebody came to the train and went through and- 'got a little bit nervous but they looked at our passports possibly, I don't know. I mean our passport had a red 'J' in it as you- as you know. Unfortunately, when I was naturalised they took all the documents and I never got them back. So, I haven't got any of those, un- which was a pity. Then we arrived at probably Amsterdam. Possibly. I'm not sure. A lot of people came onto the train and brought us something to eat. You know, the- the Jewish population. Of course they knew we- the train was going. The thing- it was full of children. Whole train was full of children. We went to Hoek- the Hoek of Holland and then we eventually got onto the ship and came across. But there is a certain- there, you say, "You have a memory?" There I have no memory or… very vague- a very vague sort of journey. But, I don't know, we were boys together and somehow there's- there's no memory at all of it. Oddly enough.

*So, it's a bit sketchy, that part?*

Nothing. It's just- I can't- I can't even visualize it. I can't remember it at all. Nothing very much happened, except this- this- this …This- this Dutch- Dutch officer there. That was amusing that he- his German was as it was. He was a Dutchman.

*Which station did you leave from in Cologne?*

Cologne? …The main station. You know, the…

*Hauptbahnhof.*

Hauptbahnhof. Yeah. But, yes I do- well it's been- I don't know whether you ever saw that…that film, "Die vergessenen Kinder von Köln?

[01:39:46]

*Yeah.*

You haven't seen it? I must get you a copy.

*Yeah I would love to see it.*

You must see it. It's very- it- no? Nobody…

*What does it- Why? What's in this film?*

What's in it? It tells the story. It tells our story. Strangely enough. It was done by the German Rundfunk- for German consumption. Somebody saw it. A friend of mine saw it. He always watches the- he has a Sky, or whatever. Years ago. And… He said he was watching it and suddenly he saw Klibansky on his screen. I thought he'd gone off his rocker. On the television screen was our old headmaster. I mean that's the picture that you've got- you've got in the book. He watched it of course and then he asked them for a copy of this. And they sent him- he got me a copy as well. So that's wonderful. I- I wrote to them and told them my story. I says would they, could they supply them- me some more copies. I think they wanted thirty or forty or fifty pounds. I said, "Thank you very much. You can keep them for that." And I had copies made here- you know. But I've- the last copy I gave to Prince Charles. When we were invited- he is the patron of the Kindertransport. When we were invited, I said to somebody, says, "I would like- he should have a copy of this." It is interesting because it tells the story of our going to the station. It shows you Cologne as it was at that time, very little traffic. They're all old newsreels put together - very well put together. And the final solution in Maly Trostenets - right to the very end. The whole story is shown- was shown on

German television. Not many people saw it. So when we were at this- in- there were about 100 people invited. Mainly Kindertransport, Jewish Care, you know – I don't know who quite organized it.

*Recently?*

A year or so ago, when this first picture was taken. And…I- And how it was organized- how they organized it. There's always a table for about ten people and one extra seat. So he circulates and sits down at the table with everybody else… and shakes hands with everybody - chats with most people. He's very good at it. As it happened, the chair next to me was free. So he sat down there. And I had this DVD in my pocket, in an envelope. And I asked him, "Do you understand or speak German?" So he said to me, "*Ein bisschen*." [a little bit] I said, "Because I've got a DVD in my pocket. I would like to give it to you, but I'm not sure whether I'm allowed to give it to you because there's a certain protocol." He says, "Of course you can give it to me!" And I've got photos to prove it. One minute I've got the blue envelope in my hand and the next minute he's got it in his hand. I'll show it to you. So I… gave him the DVD. Everybody was surprised that he- I was able to give it to him. And a week later I had a letter from his secretary thanking me for the gift that I gave him. Can show you that as well. All- all interesting things happen.

[01:43:35]

*Did he watch it? [both laugh] We don't know. ...Did he watch it?*

I- that I can't tell. I hope he did, it because it is very- a very interesting film. Now I'm going- you know, there is a chappie - forget his name now - he does copies. Does a lot of copying for people. Alf, Alf – Alf, Alf… You must- I'm sure you'd know him.

*Yes. Yes. He advertises in the AJR Journal. Yes?*

He did- he made a few copies. And I said, "Next time I see you I'll give you the one copy I have left for him to make me some more copies of it.

*So were there things you didn't quite remember, for example, about the journey - in the film?*

No.

No.

No. In the film there is- there's nothing about the journey as such. It shows- it shows you- it shows the children going onto the train. That's where that film stops. But then it continues to-t follows the story of the people who were then sent to Minsk and… it gives you the whole-it tells you the story and it's-it's quite traumat- dramatic at the very end; you see- you see everything. They didn't- I mean, it's the German television. They didn't pull any punches, they told the story as it was. It wasn't sanitized, it wasn't nice but it's- it was done. But I tried to get more copies. Anyway, I'm- I've…

[01:45:00]

*But to come back to you… So you don't recall being scared or… being fearful at the time of leaving?*

No.

*No.*

No, no it was- we were- we were quite- we were going on a- a school trip, if you like, you know. When my son went with his school skiing to Switzerland or wherever they went - Great. You know- well, he was back in a couple of weeks but… what was going to happen to us, we didn't know. But it was a temporary situation. It wasn't sort of 'goodbye forever'. That was not the situation for us.

*Yes. And it made you quite different from the other children on the Kindertransport. Being in the group, in a way.*

Well, in a group. Yes. Yes that was, that was good from our point of view.

*Yes, and was it-?*

We were together for a short while. You got used to the idea. And it is- it is- it's not black and white; it was sort of a- a period. It was grey. And it got more distance as it went along. And we continually- we got- I mean I had- I mean, you can see. The last communication I had was in 1942. So three years- for three years we had some sort of… correspondence. After we came here. So there was contact. It wasn't as if it- that was the end. It stopped. …I know people, they have different memories and… That's the last time we saw our parents, yes. It is true. But we were still in contact. And sort of in the end, war… war finished. And then you of course wanted to know what happened. We tried- nobody was able to tell you anything. There was no- there were no records. There was no information. And I've got a book- but there was also, fifty years after the event, Cologne issued a list of people. What happened. And you know, it says there, a… trans- shipped or… "changed residence…" something like that – "…to- to Minsk, but disappeared on the way." That's how they put it. So there are still… no- no actual records. No indication of what- or when- and that's the only one that- the first one we had is in the book. Well, you know it, don't you? The grey one. …what's… *"6.00 Uhr ab [Messe] Köln-Deutz"* [Dieter Corbach, Scriba Verlag, 1998] or whatever it was called.

*Yeah…yeah.*

And there for the first time we saw- and that was-

[01:47:39]

[Sound break]

*So, out of- how many Jews were there in Cologne roughly? Do you know? In- pre-war?*

I don't know. 10,000?

*10,000: that's what I would think. 10,000.*

10,000.

*And how many-?*

And it was one of the largest communities in, in, in- in, in Germany. Maybe even more than 10,000. You know, I've read it somewhere. It was one of- one of the, the- I think after Berlin and Frankfurt it was the largest Jewish community in Cologne [– meaning to say Germany?]. And it's one of the oldest. The history of it goes back to the - I don't know the - 9th century.

*And how many survived after the war? Do you know?*

No idea. I mean, what you have in Cologne today are all Russians. Mainly. Mainly Russians or Eastern Europeans.

*Yes. Yes.*

People I've met- there were- there were one or two like Siemons who was still there.

*Very few.*

Who came back. And the other one: the one that I was telling you about... But in general terms there were…

*Yeah.*

One of them- in our family, only one came back. My cousin, he at first was sent to Riga with the whole family. And he and his brother eventually finished up in Bergen-Belsen. And my cousin, his brother who- the younger- his younger brother- it was a little older than I. He was killed towards the end of the war by an American bomb when they bombed- you know when they talk today about the time when every- they asked America and Britain to 'bomb the camps'? Well in this particular case they did and- they lost their lives that way. So. It was not necessarily the solution to the problem.

*No. So, what were your first impressions arriving in England... coming off the boat?*

Cold - wet. It was… It was a miserable- it was January. It's not the best time in the year. It wasn't- it was chilly. And the heating was inadequate. I mean, much more so than today. Central heating? People used to say, “Ooh, that’s terribly unhealthy.” It's much healthier to freeze in front of a- an open fire, you know. Because in our- in the hostel we had a fireplace and fires, you know. But a big house takes a lot of heating that way.

[01:50:12]

So what was the name of the hostel?

Number 1, Minster Road. [London NW2] That's where it was.

*Number 1, Minster Road.*

Yes.

*And was it only for the Jawne children or were there other children?*

Oh, no. There were lots of others. You can see, that one picture there’s a lot of- they came from- some came from Poland. No, there were- we were the original ones who got there- about, as I said there were about twenty of us. But in the end there were about thirty-odd.

*And who ran it? Who ran that hostel?*

We had a- a lady- a Mrs.- Mrs. Cohen, who had a- she actually came from Berlin. She had a son, and he was blind. He had been blinded… during the war. At school somebody threw a stone and he was unfortunate and he was completely blind. And he was bit older than we were and he was there with her. And it was interesting; during the fog in London one day I was- I’d come back from work. I couldn't find my way back. I phoned the hostel and he came to the station, took me home. So the blind man could see… in the fog.

*He knew his way around.*

Yes.

*Yeah.*

He died fairly recently. He was quite- he was ninety-five or something.

*Did you have any contact with any of the refugee agencies when you came at all as a- do you remember anything?*

Not when we came, but later on they kept a sort of eye on us, the Refugee Committee. On this thing that I got from the archives, there is one page from wherever it came from, I don't know from a notebook or from their- from their records, where this lady had come to visit me in Cricklewood- in, in Willesden, rather. She came to the house. I wasn't there. She spoke to the…lady who lived there, the landlady. And she told her that I was alright and I was living there. So they periodically- I don't know. Once every year or two or three they did follow up the children who had been under their sort of care. Although by then, we were… We were already over twenty-one, so we were not completely out of their sort of reach or out of their responsibility.

[01:52:40]

But they did. Obviously they did keep us… on their records. And they- from time to time- There are several entries where they had tried to find me. And there's a- a list of all my addresses on that list as well. Quite interesting. When I was in Bedford later on, during the war, when I was working on this farm. That address was in there. So they- they did try, anyway. It must have been very difficult with all the children. They were spread out all over England!

*But they followed you - up to what point? Could you see- when was the last entry?*

I can’t- I don't remember the dates, but it's- they did- well I was already in Willesden, so it was after the war. It must have been after the war because I came to- maybe… at the end of the war sometime. I'm not quite sure when it was.

*So how old were you when you came on the Kindertransport?*

How old? I was thirteen. I was just Bar Mitzvah.

*Yeah. Yeah. You said. So two months afterwards.*

A few months- three months after I was Bar Mitzvah I- we all- all our boys were in this sort of age group between… twelve- some- some of our boys were Bar Mitzvah here in London and some had already been Bar Mitzvah at home. So we were-

*It was that year.*

It was that year.

*Yeah. ...And when you came were you sent to school?*

Well we first had some English lessons at- in the hostel, for a month or two. Then we were sent… to the local school in Cricklewood.

*And how was that? Could you follow the lessons?*

[01:54:22]

Oh yes we- I mean- we had had a good education. And we now joined an ordinary… elementary school so the work as such was no problem for us. English we learned fairly quickly, I suppose. And again, we were lucky in that sense, because we were a whole bunch of us. So, we were- never felt oppressed by anybody because we- we were a group of boys. I don't know how many of our boys went there, in different classes. Some were- I mean we were put into the- and as I said I was very lucky; I was put into the school athletic team which was… worth a lot. One doesn't realize it, how important it was here at that time. There was a- the- the, the London School Championships, and I took part in that. I couldn't- and the only thing- I couldn't manage to throw a cricket ball. I'd never had- had a cricket ball in my hand before. You know, to bowl a cricket ball: I didn't know- I couldn't understand what they wanted. But for the rest, yes, I was- I was …small and I- I could jump, as I said. So how-

how this was possible, but for my for my size I was very… Well, I- I performed as well, or else they wouldn't have put me on the team.

*So sport was more important here in the school than certainly in- in Jawne?*

In Jawne, not at all. [Bea laughs]

*But probably even in an ordinary German school, sport wasn't-*

I don't know how- but here- especially here in the schools it was- if you could play- were a good rugger player, or a good swimmer- in the local school in Bedford, I remember, one of our boys was a very good swimmer. He was in the school team. That means he got school colours and, yes, you were important within the school. It was-

*But what about- did you continue speaking German to each other, or did everyone switch to English?*

Very quickly. I- I couldn't under- I could still understand it. I couldn't speak it anymore. I'd lost it completely. You never heard it. You never spoke it. You lived in an English home with- with English people and… very, very, very quickly we stopped speaking German. Certainly not to each other. And in the main we were living in- in an English environment in an English home with English people and so automatically that's what happened. In fact, I acquired the accent- the accent I have, because of- I worked in the diamond business. Because when I was at school, I had- I mean it's- it's- it's a- annoyed me terribly, [Bea laughs] but in, in, in my- in the business, in the trade, they either spoke Flemish or they spoke Dutch or they spoke Yiddish and they spoke bad English. So I acquired all of it. [Bea laughs] I can speak some Dutch. I can speak Flemish and I can speak Yiddish and I speak… English so people- says, "Where do you come from?"

[01:57:35]

*So you are saying, before you started there you, your, you sounded more English?*

I was- I was English! For all intents and purposes, there was nothing- there was no indication at all that I wasn't. So only when I started work, you- do you acquire these things.
And you- what- you repeat what you hear. And then at a certain moment in time you don't hear it yourself, but other people do. Depends on what their education was. But my explanation that I've- I lived in Africa for many years, usually it satisfied the majority of the people which was- was true anyway.

*And at that point when you arrived did you, in the first school and after you were evacuated, did you want to be English? Did you want to fit in? What- or was it-?*

It was a question of- nothing deliberate. We were there… We didn't encounter any anti-Semitism at that time. People- it wasn't- the only way it affected us: we wouldn't- we did not attend morning prayers in our… English school. So we used to go out, but- but once the prayers were over, we went in and sang the hymns, you know, with everybody else. [half laughs] It's… a crazy situation.

*And was there anything done for the, sort of, religious side of things in the hostel?*

Well, you saw The Centre. The Community in London had sent two people to Bedford…to- to look after our welfare - the children who were there. So they had- we had The Centre we could go to, which was… that this- he had been a- a teacher. They were good people; they were really social, capable people. And the younger ones especially who needed- you know we were all the- the older ones were independent. Some needed clothes, so they saw to it that they got money from The Committee and London to- to help, if it was needed. I remember... They took on the house; that's how short money was. They were employed by the Dollis Hill and Walm Lane Synagogue. They had to find accommodation in Bedford. They took on this house- biggish house. Cost 150 pounds a year in rent. They didn't know where they could get 150 pounds from. Who would pay the rent? They'd taken on the place, hoping that somebody in the Community would come up with some of the money anyway. That's- that's actually what happened. Money was very, very short and people- those people with money had disappeared or had evacuated themselves or had gone to America or whatever. And everybody else, yes, they were working people who made a living but not - not very much more.

[02:00:44]

*So Kurt, how many months did you spend in the- in Minster Road before going to Bedford?*

We came in January- at the end of January, and we left at the end of July I suppose. Beginning of August. That was about five, six months. So for the first month or two we didn't go to school. Then we went to school for two or three months. Then the school holidays started. And then the government decided to evacuate all children from London into the country. Majority of children went. But then you had the sort of 'phony war'; nothing happened for the first six months or so. So many parents said, "What? That's ridiculous." They brought the children back from wherever they had been. Because why should they be- I don't know - God knows where - living with strange people? If they were could live at home cause London, this- the bombing started I don't know quite when. In- sometime in 1940. That's six months after the beginning of the war.

*But you stayed in Bedford, or you-?*

Yes, we were in Bedford. Yes, we saw- I mean from the- from Bedford you could see London burn! You know… the sky was red. When the, the Blitz started, you know, the East End of London was almost destroyed.

*And you could see that?*

Oh yes. I mean we saw the fires. We saw- we saw the burning and then later on when I went back to London 1942, I mean we got the doodlebugs, the V-1s and V-2s. But I- I lived in Swiss Cottage and I used to- we used to draw the curtains to able to see. And from where we lived, it looked in the direction of... Parliament Hill, of the… what's it? The Hampstead Heath. We could see them come over. You know, you saw the aeroplane with the fire coming out of its tail. And it came straight over. It went over Swiss Cottage towards Kilburn. And usually, I mean, the- the engine sort of stopped close to Swiss Cottage, close to Finchley Road. So if it went past then you didn't care; it went further, you see? The only time they dropped down is when you didn't hear them come. But then one day one of these things dropped on a house and I knew somebody there. And after that, we went to the shelter.

Something has to happen before you do- do anything. Up to then it was something to- almost like television. You watched them come.

*Where was the shelter?*

At Finchley Road Station.

*In the tube station?*

Yeah. We went there and then we didn't, you know. If you are young you don't- you're not… You are frightened but you're not worried about it, you know. It's-

[02:03:44]

*Yeah. Let's just go back to Bedford. So you said you were- a family took you in. There were two of you.*

Yeah.

*And did they know about your background?*

Of course…

You said they thought you were from London…

Yes. We were London children - you know - evacuees.

*Did it not come up at all, that-?*

Well they soon discovered what- what. For instance, interestingly, at that time in the hostel we were a strictly kosher. Because that was… what was expected. What, what happened, because we were considered to be very religious. They were- they didn't realize that we weren't. Some were, but not all of us. And...Without- I sometimes went to the store and did the shopping. And I was supposed to buy pork sausages. Pork sausages were more expensive

in those days than beef sausages. But I wouldn't- I- I did- I told the butcher not pork - beef sausages. And I brought these home and she got angry. “They gave- gave you the wrong ones again!” [laughs] He didn't give me the wrong ones. I asked- I asked for them. But apart from that- well they- of course they discovered- we told them- at certain moments it was talked about what A- about our language. When- where we had come from. Well, obviously they- they knew. But... They were lovely people; they were nice people.

*What were they called?*

Pardon?

*What were their names?*

Names? Allen. Mr. and Mrs. Allen. Sid Allen, he was. He had been- you see what happened with people- before, when he was a young man he was a blacksmith in a small village. A lot of horses. A, a blacksmith was quite a prosperous man in the village. But then there were not so many horses anymore. The horses didn't need shoeing and he then didn't work as a blacksmith anymore and he worked in the local factory. And I remember he earned forty-two shillings a week. Just over two pounds. It was a man's- it wasn't a skilled man's wage. He wasn't- he didn't have the skill that was wanted anymore. So- but that was a man's wage: just over two pounds a week. Three pounds, he was already earning really good money. So, money was worth something.

[02:06:11]

But… they were nice people; they were decent people. And, again, they had never been to London. That was a long way away. London from Bedford, that- people didn't travel that far. Jews- they’d never met a Jew before. So it was a strange thing to meet, you know, that kind of an- in some cases, people who went on to well, even the…simpler people, they looked and see- wanted to see where their horns were. You know, there were- I mean they had this experience. I can't say I had. But... And our old headmaster, he was a- already a man of the world. He'd been an Olympic swimmer and he had been around- he was swimming in the- he was in the English water-polo team. Had been in Berlin for the Olympic Games. So he was already…a more, I don’t know, ‘man of the world’ than other people.

*This was in Bedford in the school?*

In Bedford.

So…

*So what happened with the pork? Did you make a decision for yourself, or did you…?*

Look, every- it happened while- anyway, in the end we had pork sausages and I ate what I- I was- I wasn't- I was- some children were bothered; I was never all that bothered by it. Didn't worry me. But we had a… service in Bedford. We had a - not a synagogue but we had a- we had a- religious services. And we had a somewhat- a little bit of a religious education via the Centre that we had.

[02:08:02]

*But was there a committee in charge of you in Bedford, or who was-? Who was…?*

Well these two people who were employed by the- by the synagogues in London, they were sort of guardians. They looked after our-

*Right.*

If we needed something, we could go to them.

*OK. So they were sent with you, so to speak.*

Like Hugo and his brother. They were younger. They were growing. They needed clothes. So they went to them and says, [sound interruption]

*Yeah. You were saying people like Hugo and his brother were small and went-*

That's right. So they organized these things for them. So we had a little bit of a cushion there, that somebody was available for the children if needed.

*And what of- what happened to your teacher from the Jawne school? Mr. Seligman? [Seligsohn]*

Well he- as I told you, he went- he joined the British Army and he got a tumour and he died.

*But was he with you in the first hostel?*

Yes he was- he was our- he and his wife the- the rabbi from Benn- Bonn- he was there with us. He was our- he was the person in charge of the hostel.

*The first one, but then he- not in Bedford anymore?*

He- he stayed in London. I don't know what happened. We- we lost touch with him. But my friend in that book writes about him. Oh, he- he hated him. That's Kolman, you know, the one who writes to the magazine.

*Yeah.*

Mostly- Most-

*You? You did you have-? What was your experience of him?*

Well… I- I, I never had these sort of extremes… dislikes. And I didn't feel that…hard done by, you know. Some people think- well, it's just an example of this particular- he felt… rightly so, that we should have had a decent education. But I've explained to him many times- these people who brought us here, couldn't educate their own children, never mind find money for us. So you couldn't expect it. They took care of us as best as they could. They saw to it that we were safe. We were fed and we were watered. We went to school. But for the rest… it wasn't up to them to buy us an expensive education. They couldn't- they couldn't afford it. But … doesn't see it like that; he resents it. He's resented it for seventy-five years. It's been eating him all his life.

[02:10:42]

*Yeah. But- but you accepted it… in the circumstances?*

Well I- I'm more phlegmatic in- I don't feel that strongly. It would have been wonderful if it had been available. It wasn't available, so I can't worry about what should have been. Nothing I could do about it.

*No – no…*

So you- we all made the best of- and with making the best of everything, the majority of them have done…well. Some have done exceptionally well, like Rolf Schild. He- you know, like Lord- Lord Dubs - another one. There are many examples of people who, without any aid, without any help without any anything from anybody… Against all expectations. A friend of mine, he died recently. He was the National Chairman of the Road Haulage Association. We started with my motorbike. That's how he started his business. And we started with nothing and by acumen, hard work, what have you, it was possible to do that. And many of them- many of them did. Some, exceptionally so.

*But you said you had very good relationship with the headmaster in the school you went to.*

Well, it was a personal thing.

*Yes. But did he-? What was- did he- did he think you should stay on in school, for example? Was that a topic?*

[02:12:12]

It wasn't available! School finished at fifteen. End of story. Even if it had been- it wasn't available. Yes, he says- he suggested: "Try and get-" I- I did a correspondence course, but …it wasn't. That was entirely your own- under your own. Some people were able to do that. I know one young man. He was very, very clever; had a certain kind of brain. He could teach

himself anything, provided he had a book. And he did. He did all sorts of stuff. Eventually he was a Professor on the Open University. He became a philosopher.

*What's his name?*

Hanfling - Oswald. Oswald Hanfling. He died- and I think he had a motor accident, some years ago. But some people could do that.

*Yeah.*

He taught himself, out of a book, how to become a sailor. He used to have a sailing boat on the Thames. I says, "How did you learn it?" He says, "Here. Since you want to, here is the book. Teach yourself."

*Auto-didact.*

He was able to do this.

*Yeah.*

Some people can.

*Yeah. But you said, let's say, for example* Hugo Marom . *So the- he came out with the- he was a Winton child wasn't he?*

Who?

*Hugo.*

Hugo, yes.

*Yeah. So there were also some Winton children there in-?*

He had- he- no, there were- there were two- two sets. One boy was there - perhaps you've heard of his name – Tomasov.

*No…*

Tomasov. The eldest went to Israel and got killed in the War of Independence. His younger brother became a judge. He was a judge in Ber Sheva. He's also died fairly recently. So, people from nowhere, without any parental help, managed to pull themselves up by their own shoestrings.

*But I mean, how did they get to Bedford? Like Hugo and-?*

They were in our hostel. They went to school.

*Oh, so you were in the same hostel in-*

In London.

*In Minster Road?*

Yes – yes.

And then sent out-

They came- they came over when the- they found homes for these people. I mean when they tell- when the Wintons tell the story, it's not quite as- as they tell it. You said they had to find homes for each and every one all over the country. Well, four… six of them were in our hostel.

*Six Winton children?*

Whether any- I think those two sets. Two- one was- the one was- there were four brothers and the other were two brothers.

*And were you aware at the time- was it a separate category? I mean was it that they came...*

No, they came to the hostel and-

*From Czechoslovakia? But they came from a different place.*

That's right.

*Yeah.*

We had- it made no- I mean, they were- they were- I mean, they were our boys. You know we were together. We were together in the same place. Went to the same school. Had the same experience. But they, the Czech children, they were- again, what happened was- I've told- the Czech government in exile, here, they collected all these children. If they, if they agreed, or I don't know quite how, and they sent them to a boarding school in Wales. So they had a decent education. From Wales, they took- some went back to Czechoslovakia to have a higher education. And Hugo was one of those.

[02:15:38]

*So he was sent to that boarding school?*

He was sent to that boarding school. And he went to Czechoslovakia after the war. He went to university or something like that.

*Yeah…*

He learnt how to fly. And he was a flier in the War- War of Independence.

*So they got a better education, the Czech children?*

Oh, yes. Yes. Because of the Czech government. They had- again it was- they took the responsibility for the Czech children. So we all had slightly different experiences.

*But it sounds to me slightly that the- because you came with the school it was almost like a Hakhsarah . Almost like. I mean it was- the way, together…*

We were together. It was only for this short period.

*Yeah.*

That four or five months. And some- then, at a certain moment in time, quite a few went to Israel or to Palestine - illegally. If they have finished up in… Oh, dear- I forget the name now. In the kibbutz fairly up- up north. Yeah, I- I once went to see them up there.

*Who? From the, from Jawne?*

Who'd been- Jawne – Who'd been- from Bedford at the time, you know.

*OK…*

You know, life went on. And some… There were- we had Shaliachs [Israeli emissaries] We had people who- we had Habonim and so on. Some were persuaded, or wanted, to go to Palestine. Went illegally. And they got there. And some went into the Army and...

*Kibbutz in the north of Israel…*

And the kibbutz- and they're still- one or two are still in that same kibbutz up there.

*Yeah?*

Yes.

*Where is it?*

Up north. Near Kfar Blum. Kfar HaNassi. That's the place, Kfar HaNassi. It's- it's the sort of the beginning of the Jordan River. It's- the Jordan Valley is down below. Yes, we went- I went to see them.

[02:17:40]

*Did you have any contact with Bachad? You know the religious-*

No. No.

*It's a religious Zionist movement.*

No, probably one of ours- they probably were in Bachad, but they- they also went to Kfar and Kfar HaNassi. What was his name? ...His name was- in Cologne was Königshöfer. There were three or four brothers. There was a sister. But in Israel they all changed their name to Hazor. And Shmuel Hazor was in Kfar HaNassi.

*Right.*

Well it's a long time ago now. Twenty odd years ago that we- my wife was- we were together.

*So in Bedford there was that centre. But apart from that, were you a youth movement or anything else? Or was there…?*

No.

*No - in Bedford?.*

Not really.

*No.*

We- we- no, there wasn't a youth movement as such. But there were people, you know, they came from Habonim and whatever. And some- in fact one of them who came to us in Bedford, when I went to Kfar HaNassi, he was also in Kfar HaNassi. He had a name- it's

amazing what I- what one remembers. His name is Sami Chanakovich Chalkachow. Can you imagine that I can remember this?

*It’s quite something. Yeah.*

That was his name. Was a nice guy. And he also went there. And some of the younger ones. But, I could imagine that the majority are not alive anymore by now. It’s-

*So there was a community in Bedford - for you?*

Oh, yes. Yes there was a Jewish community. A lot of people from London had evacuated themselves. Business people who- the families were in Bedford and they used to go to London every day by train and come back again. Depending on their age. If they were too old …to be the Army or anything like that. Those people were commuting from Bedford to London. And the families were- wives and small children were in Bedford.

*And then what did you do when you finished school then?*

Well, I started- looked, looked for this job. This famous job. Became an engineer for- for four hours.

*So tell us about- What were the options basically, when you finished school? What- what- what were you thinking?*

Anything you wanted to do, to find a job. So at that time it wasn't difficult to find work. All the men were being called into the Army. So gradually that's what happened. All the able-bodied people. So then I lost this one job. So-

[02:20:12]

*Tell us why you-tell us. You didn't tell us on camera yet.*

No?

*What happened? No-*

No, no. I started- I started… became an engineer. It wasn't the kind of engineer I wanted to be but I didn't know what- what it entailed. Foreman came to see us put it- I was at the bench. We had to put some screws together. I don't know quite what it was. Nothing of any importance. And… I could imagine we started at seven-thirty in the mornings and lunch was twelve o'clock - lunch hour. And he came and said, "The manager wants to see you." Only four hours in the job and already contact with a manager. You know, he was close to God Almighty. Whoever gets to see a manager in a large factory with thousands of employees? So we were taken up to his office, which seemed very large and very important. I don't know whether it was, in fact. And he sat behind this desk and after a moment - he didn't quite know how to put it - he says, "Well you can't work here. You are Enemy Aliens." So this Jewish refugee, after four hours, became an Enemy Alien. So- what I don't remember, and I've always tried, whether we- they- they paid us for these four hours that we had been there. I can't remember.

*But were you ever tribunal-ed?*

Later on. Yes. When I was sixteen, there was this...You were- I was called to the Bow Street police- to the Magistrates Court. And you were interrogated by the magistrate. And the first questions she asked me, and I will never forget this, she says, "Do you like Hitler?" Now, what kind of a question is that? If I did like him, would I admit it to a- a police court? To a magistrate? But anyway, that was the first question that she asked me, this lady magistrate sitting on her… podium. And then they asked me- I don't know what else. But anyway I was classified as a 'Friendly Alien'. So I could work. And I had a- this 'Alien' certificate. This- this little booklet. But the restriction was we couldn't travel without informing the police. For instance when I was in London and I wanted to go to Bedford, I had to go to a local police station and say, "On Friday night I'm going to Bedford." It says, "When are you coming back?" It says, "I should be back on Monday." And I had to go back on the Monday to say, "I'm back again." So they- that- that was the control. I mean, if you- if you didn't do it. I mean here there is no registration. You could disappear just like that. It really wasn't very difficult. But anyway, that's what- how it was.

*Where- where was the tribunal? Where was it?*

[02:23:13]

In Bow Street police.

*In London?*

Yes. Well, Bow Street Magistrates' Court near- near the [Royal] Opera House somewhere around there.

*So when the- that foreman in the factory told you 'enemy alien' it was actually before- before-*

Before that, yes.

*Before- so you were not even- you were fifteen?*

I was fifteen. I wasn't old enough yet for any- but I was- that was the restriction. It was a factory which was producing… war- important war materials, which- which was restricted as far as that's concerned.

*But how could- if you were fifteen you couldn't have been an enemy alien in that sense... because I think children were not affected as such?*

Well, but when you were working, that was the restriction. If you were- if you were suspect they- they didn't go into your background. They just- that was- it wasn't even an argument. It was- this was- you had a- you were an enemy. You were an alien. You are an enemy alien. So…

*How did you feel then when- that happened?*

I didn't- I didn't like it at all, you know that suddenly I was- before, I was friendly. Now I was an enemy. Anyway, it didn't worry me for more than five minutes I don't suppose. So I looked for another job. And I found a job in - what was known then, loosely - a music shop.

A music shop. This was the biggest in Bedford. They had pianos. They had musical instruments. They had records. Had radio. They repaired pianos, they repaired radio. And I thought maybe, you know, I'll learn something about radios, mechanic - whatever. And which I did, to start off with. And then the mechanic went- called into the Army. So that was the end of my learning period. But I had a job there. For in those days we had- radio had a battery and also an accumulator. Accumulator had to be recharged every week and had sulphuric acid in it. This was a- today - Health and Safety - you would have to wear a mask, and rubber gloves and a rubber suit to handle sulphuric acid.

[02:25:21]

In those days I ruined all my clothes. Because you don't see it, but littles dots- spots of- and my trousers were- became all holey. Anyway. So my main- one of my serious jobs there was to- people had these radios and they needed - accumulators. So most people had radio, two accumulators. One was on charge in the- at the shop and the other one they put into their radio. That was one of my jobs. But in the end I got fed up with it because I was the boy. I was being told by the girls what to do. There were lots of- they'd quite a big- twenty girls working there. Not young girls – women.

*And you still stayed with the family initially?*

Oh, yes. I was still there, yes. I was earning twelve shillings and sixpence a week.

*So you paid them?*

I paid them all my money I earned and she gave me sixpence a week pocket money.

*And your- your fellow- the person who was billeted with you was also still there?*

No, he was in America by then already. His parents had- had- their number had been called; he had gone by then.

*In the war time he managed to-?*

Yes. Well I showed you that picture with the four people. One of those is this chap.

*So you stayed by yourself? You were with the family?*

Yes. Now, some years later, my cousin in New York said she thinks she knows his sister. And she thinks she knows where he is. So she gave me his address. I wrote to this person. Never had any reply. When I was in Florida, I met with my cousin. She said, “His sister is here and she’s sure that is his address. I've got his telephone number.” So I phoned. And I- somebody- he answered. He didn't know who it was. I told him who I was. There was a long silence. And then the so-and-so said, “I suppose I should have answered your letter.” So this was forty years later. He must have thought about it that he never answered - when I wrote to him, he never answered. So he did come. When we got together at my sister-in-law's house - she lived up- they were in Miami and she lived in Lake Worth. Two- two- there were two other of our boys. The three of them came up to see me in- in Florida. But that's the only time I- but one- after that, once more I spoke to him. But he- he wasn't interested and just- I'm not- I do it once, I do it a second time but there's no third time. Didn't want to. What's the point?

[02:28:07]

*Was there a reason you think he didn’t answer-he didn’t want to…?*

There's this other one I showed you. The- the old man. My brother-in-law said, “Who is that old man?” Well he- we were together. He said to me this, about this situation he says, “When we came here we looked forward. We never looked back. And that's how it is. We didn't want to know what happened behind. What’s behind, that’s forgotten about.” And this was perhaps his attitude as well. So, if that's what he wants…

*But you don't think so? You like to be- you wanted to be in touch?*

Well, I… You don't say it- history doesn't exist. It does exist! And I suppose as you get older- at one time I didn't- couldn't be bothered either. But nowadays, well. I guess- I suppose it all really started because of this Maly Trostenets business. Because we didn't know for forty, fifty, sixty- it took, you know, and the way I saw it- I had to wait seventy years before I could say Kaddish. You know, this- this was the sort of thinking. And suddenly it happened. But it

took so many years before we actually knew what had happened. But other people, they knew. It was known that this and this and this happened. In our case, it didn't. There was a- they left the- the- the station in Cologne. And then, no- no trace. No trace of any kind. There was no- nobody came back. Nobody knew what happened to these people. So, as I said, the book that the Corbach wrote, or recorded, that was the first time that one actually knew: this actually happened.

[02:30:00]

*So did you say Kaddish before? …What did you do?*

Well… yes, but no. You know. It- it was again this grey area. Suddenly it disappears.

*Because I heard that some people, some Kinder would just take Tish'a B'Av, for example, and say Kaddish on Tish'a B'Av.*

Right.

*Or, you know…*

But somehow… I had this need to go. There had to be- as I said, this has to be a closure somehow. And that was the closure, that at least now, I know this is what happened. This is what happened in this particular place. I've been there. I've been there several times.

*It was important for you to know.*

Yes. For me it was important. I wanted my granddaughter to come along, but unfortunately she- to this event which is only a weekend event. The main- the main- we got there- people got there on a Thursday. It was- the event was on a Friday. She could only come on the Saturday. I said, "There's no point coming on a Saturday. It's all over. It's finished. It's gone. The thing has happened. The commemoration was on that day. That was the important day. There's no point in coming just for one day, when it's all over." So. But in the meantime, I've- my- son has been to Cologne and my granddaughter. And I want to take my grandson. If he- he's finishing with his university at the end of this- this- this year is the end of his- his

final is when- after his exams, I want him to come over there. I said, “I want you to know that the Marx family existed before it came to England.” Because the grandparents, the great-grandparents are buried in Deutz.

*In the Jewish cemetery?*

Yes. And the two places where I lived I still- they have to be seen. And there's also the- the other place, wherever it is the... Weilerswist, where the family had originally come from.

*It's important for you to show it.*

I want him to see it. Once I’ve- the others have seen it. Most of it. And I want them to see it as well. Then you Says, it didn't start in Draycott Avenue in Kenton. It started before that. And of course there is the family tree which- so there is a history. And I want them to see that history. And it’s- it will always wonder. I wrote my wife's story more or less. But I- She wouldn't talk about it. She didn't- wouldn’t write it. She should have done. She was very good at it, but she wouldn't. And when my granddaughter went to- she went to JFS, at a- at a certain age they sent them to Eastern Europe to the camps- visit the camps. And she went to Auschwitz with her school. I didn't know that she took the article along and she read some of it to the other children. So it did- it- it did sort of register, put it that way. So she could say she went to the place where she knows her grandmother had been for three years. So I am pleased I wrote it, because I was pleased when I heard afterwards that she had shown it to the teacher who accompanied them. And she read something - some of it to the other kids. And I think it's important that they do these things. That they know about it.

[02:33:40]

*And was it was something you talked about with your children, or-?*

Not all that much.

*Do you find it's coming back more – now, or-?*

No. I don't- Normally I don't talk about it, really. I have… been asked by- Michael Newman once rang me, he says, “Would you go to that particular school and talk to the children about your experiences?” I was very reluctant. I'm afraid to bore… children. But they're not bored by it, strangely enough.

*And did you do it?*

I did do it. I was- when I was in Cologne they asked me to go to my friend's Larissa's daughter's school.

*Aha? Which school is that?*

I don't know. She's thirteen now. So this is a *Grundschule* [primary school]. I think she's changed to the higher one. And… Yes, I- I told him the story. I also mentioned Kristallnacht; the children had never heard of Kristallnacht. But the teacher then when I mentioned it - because they asked, “What? What is?” They didn't know. So he explained to them what it was. That- that was- he was very good at explaining what had happened. And a year or eighteen months later they had a class- and this teacher taught them religion I think, and English – I’m not quite sure. And she mentioned refugees. She was talking about present-day refugees. And this little- there’s a naughty boy in the class. There always is one. And he put up his hand and says, “I know a refugee.” So the teacher said, “Yes? Tell us all about it.” Was talking about me. So I'm pleased it's- it- it did- it did something for him. He remembered, nearly two years later, what I had told them before. It made an impression, which- so, as people say who go to schools, they say the children do remember. They may not say anything, but you think- you wonder whether they were bored by it, but they do, somehow. The key ward- the key word was ‘refugee’. Then he remembered that he- he knew a refugee. But she didn't mind- she didn't know they were German refugees. So.

[02:35:56]

*But you've done it only once. You're not going to schools-*

I don't do it regularly. No.

*You don't want to do it?*

I've done it three or four times in Germany - in Germany, strangely enough.

*Ah…*

Because they asked me to do it. And-

*Not only in that school? So you've done-*

No, in others as well.

*Yeah?*

So I prepared myself. So I asked somebody who was with me, I said I was trying to tell them about that I had been inter- I had an interview. He says, "What is 'interview' in German?" He says, "Interview." You see that is- the point is that you don't know what words are being used now and which words are not being used. Quite a few English words have become part of the language.

*So you didn't forget your German? You- or, initially, you said.*

My German is that of a thirteen-year-old boy. You know certain things. Well I- I can read it but I couldn't- when I see how people express themselves, I couldn't- I couldn't say that. I don't- it's not part of my- of the language I know. But probably it's simple enough for the children to understand.

*It's perfect. Yes. Yes, so we digressed slightly. Let's just come back to-*

I always- I always digress, sorry.

*That's fine. It's fine. Let's come back to…to 1942. So you were still in Bedford but at some point you decided to-*

[02:37:25]

Yes. Well I- I left this music shop. Which was interesting actually. It, it, it introduced me to classical music. Because at that time the… BBC Symphony Orchestra was stationed in Bedford. The music shop used to sell tickets for the concerts. And the staff used to show people to their seats. So that was my- I used to earn an extra two shillings and sixpence for that. So I had- I liked the job. People came to the Corn Exchange with their tickets. I would show them to their seat. But I was the boy. And the boy had to do all sorts of other things. For instance if we had a soloist, somebody had to get the tea for the soloist. So I had to go across the road to the hotel and get a tray with tea for the- so I, I didn't collect autographs which was a pity because I met all the important…solo players, piano… All of them.

*Like whom?*

Myra Hess - Solomon, Pouishnoff, Moiseiwitsch- all of them. And the violinist Ida Haendel - whoever they were at that time, they all had tea brought to them by me. And I always was very upset later on. Not one of them ever gave me a tip. Not one of them!
Including Thomas Beecham and Malcolm Sargent the- the famous directors. The conductors. They were all there. They were all served by- by me when I was fifteen years old - or sixteen. So but I learned to like classical music. Because I attended- every week we had a concert. Or sometimes two concerts. So instead of playing music I make a musical instrument.

*So how did you get to making musical instruments?*

My son learned to play the fiddle at school. And his teacher said, “He needs a better fiddle.” So, one day I was a bit- I had a friend who was a Master at City of London- Music Master. I told him. He says, “Well we get lots of instruments. When I get a fairly decent one I'll let you know and you can buy it.” Which I did. And I was at a friend's house there was this beautiful violin sitting on the table. I said, “Where did this come from?” He said, “Our friend made it.” When he told me that I says, “If he can make it, I'm going to make it.” So how do you make a violin? And I went to all the various music shops at London - to some of them. And I said, “I want to learn how to make violins.” And in Wardour Street there was a famous old place. What was it called? I forget - doesn't matter. Quite a well-known musical instrument maker. And he said, “Just a moment.” It was a little old shoppy. There was a trap door in the floor.

And he lifts the trap door, and he says, “Jack can you come out a moment?” They had a workshop under the floorboards. And Jack came up. He says, “You used to teach somewhere, didn't you?” He says, “Yes.” He used to teach at the adult education class in Northwood. Northwood Hills, rather. So I went to Northwood Hills evening class. And eventually I got into the class. That was 1981, or something like that. And I've been making musical instruments ever since. Well, not anymore. I- I can't anymore but...So my son has one of my fiddles. My granddaughter plays one of my fiddles. I've got a few here. I’ve got a viola…

*Fantastic.*

… and a violin.

[02:41:20]

*As a hobby or commercially?*

No, no. As a hobby. Because- when I finished one, I said “I can't believe I made it.” It's really a work of art. But-

*And do you think you were inspired by the music shop, there? Or by…?*

Well it was all part- you know, sometimes things happened. With me, everything always happened for no particular reason. It's just a coincidence.

*But in Cologne, were you exposed to music - classical music? Or was that not part of-?*

I- I used to go to the Opera House in those days. We used to go right up- is that when it was still in the Ring – Hohenzollernring I think. Right up in the gods! It was… very. And the amazing thing is that the sound up there, was as good as it was down below. So-

*What did you see?*

You- you couldn't- Oh… Rigoletto and… I don't know. Cavalleria Rusticana – and all sorts of- we could- those popular ones that were playing at the time. So, it's - yes I- we had- we

had music in that sense. But in those days there wasn't a lift; you had to climb up right to the top, you know.

[02:42:35]

*By yourself you went to the opera, or with friends?*

It must have been with a friend.

*Yeah.*

The parents wouldn't have been able to make it up there I don't think. You had to be young to climb to the- it was very- very high. It seemed very high, anyway.

*Yes – yes.*

I don't know how high it was. But that was…a musical experience.

*And then- why did you decide to come back to London, or- from-?*

I was working. I was polishing diamonds in Bedford.

*Right?*

And the firm came back to London. So I went with them.

*So tell us how you managed to get into diamonds, and in Bedford.*

Well, after I was working for the music shop…parts of it I was quite happy with, but others, because I was 'the boy' - again - the boy had to go and get sandwiches for everybody. There was one not-so-nice female. She ran- was the manageress of one of the shops. And she would, when I was busy, she would ring the other shop and says, "Tell the boy to come." So the boy came. She says, "Go and buy me some sandwiches." So one day the boy said, "Get them yourself." And I left! [laughing] So that was the end of the story. I got fed up with her.

[02:43:54]

*Yeah…*

And then I- friends of mine had started to polish diamonds in Henley-on-Thames, I think. And my uncle said he knows somebody. They came over, were Belgian refugees who'd come from Antwerp, who had been merchants. But in those days, you became a craftsman before you became a merchant. That's how you learned your trade. So, I went to see them. And...They'd been sweeping their factory out themselves. They said, "That's a good idea." So I got- they gave me a pound a week; I earn much more. And I had a broom and I cleaned the factory. And then I gradually… learned how to- they taught me how to polish- I mean, to clean the factory, that wasn't any value to them as far as I was concerned. But I learned how to polish. And gradually I… earnt my living at it. And I had my own little workshop. And then somebody, again, out of the blue these people that got a licence to buy diamonds in West Africa. Belgian - Belgian company. And this lady had been the secretary of the previous company. She was also a director. And she saw me and says, "Just the person I wanted to see." "That's nice." [laughs] And she says, "Would you go to Africa for us?" Who goes to Africa, you know. And I was married by then. And I said to my wife when I came home, "How would you like to go to Africa? " She didn't, wasn't keen at all. Anyway I consulted somebody who'd, was more knowledgeable had the experience you said to me. That opportunity comes once in a lifetime. You've got to take it. If it doesn't work out. So you haven't left it you must try it. And I did and it was the…very important decision I made at the time because I've worked for this company for seven years. Then we started a business in London. And because of all this later on I was working for the Tanzanian government for 25 or 30 years. In a very… senior position with because we had was the richest diamond mine ever discovered at that time and we, we marketed it in England. So.

[02:46:37]

*So you were the representative.*

No, no, no. We got the production from the mine. And we valued it and sorted it and prepared it for so. And the. I had about apart from my general manager. And about 30 girls,

well 30 people working in which is a big operation in Diamond terms. You had a huge- I never dared tell anybody because they would have called me over the liars and all of a sudden. . It didn't exist that sort of thing. You know it was. Like being in charge of De Beers you know something other. But it's- so I've my whole career was in the diamond business. It started with a broom.

*Yeah. But you went to Africa when?*

In 1955

*Right.*

Beginning of ‘55 I went out. Came back to- my son was born in London. Took him back in the carry cot. But one year was enough tropics is not an ideal place to take a child.

*And then came back?*

And then we came back.

*But in when you started working for- with diamonds during the war time then you also did some war work?*

That was afterwards.

[02:48:04]

Well…

*How did that happen?*

I ever came, well…again I was such a sacrifice for the company. Somebody had to…do work of national importance in the sense. So whether they- whoever the government department was that came to the factory… and they didn't object to my being called up because they didn't want to be called themselves. So I became a farmer. Which was also good experience. I

used milk cows, clean out the cowshed. They wouldn't let me… Well it was also the hostel. They wouldn't let me in until they took all my clothes off. I stank to high heaven. After cleaning out the cowshed during the day… You smell like…[laughs] like shit.

*Literally*

Literally.

*That was quite a change from London to… Where were you sent to?*

To Buckinghamshire. You know…Newport Pagnell which is about fifty miles from London.

*And this was- you said- by yourself?*

Yeah. So…

*And the hostel? What sort of hostel did you stay in?*

Well… they were all similar people… who had been directed to work on the, on the land. For similar reasons. Some were actually farmers but the majority of them were people like… not like me but the people had been directed.

*So refugees- were there other refugees?*

Some were and some weren't - all kinds of people.

It wasn't a large place… it was, it was OK.

*And you were not upset that…*

And then I managed, I was very, I got fed up with cleaning cow sheds. And I had the chance to go into the machinery pool of the… of this whole organization and they supplied me with a motorbike. And we used to go from farm to farm with a big machine… to, in land drainage division and be this other fellow and we had a big excavator. We used to clean out their

drains and they hated us. The farmers didn't like these people who came to get onto their land to the water, because some of the fields were waterlogged. It had to be done but the people who made the decision where the water was going. They weren't interested in the farmer. They were interested in whatever. So the farmer knew the water would run from here to there. And the man from the from the, from the County Council or from the committee said the water should run that way. That meant we had to make a big mess on his field. But we didn't clear up the mess, we just made the mess. But it was again interesting. So… I learned how to ride a motorbike, I operated a, an excavator.

*And did you stay there until the war finished?*

The day the war…the foreman came. “Well you can go. You don't have to work here anymore.” I left my…

[02:51:16]

…colleague, my partner in the middle of a field with a big machine. After a thaw the machine had sunk into the ground by that much, you had to dig it out, you know. It was, it was everywhere. I left him. I said “Good luck to you.” And I went back to London and carried on with the diamonds.

*And where did you live in London then*?

A friend of mine’s brother had gone to Palestine and we took over the flat that he had in Willesden Green.

*So back to a similar area? Yeah but in the meantime you said you lived in Swiss Cottage in between?*

That was… no that was before. Yeah it was during the war. The early… first I went to come back to the hostel in….. at the time the committee had two hostels, one in Minster Road in Cricklewood and the other one in Willesden. The girls were in Willesden and the boys were in, in Cricklewood.

*So is this that hostel which… is the lady- has written this book?*

That's right.

*The Willesden Green?*

Willesden Lane.

*Willesden Lane?*

Yes. Is that 2-4-3 Willesden Lane, yes that's right.

*So that is that hostel… So did some of the Jawne…girls go there?*

[02:52:29]

The girls went… well they went later on. Of course it was just… still one of the hostels still in London where people came to.

*Yeah.*

And …yes I was in the hostel when the… pianist was there.

*Do you remember? Do you remember?*

Well, I knew her well.

*Oh!*

Yes, yes I remember when the letter arrived from the Royal Academy said she'd been accepted. We were there. Did you see the, did you see the play?

*I did.*

Oh you know, do you know her Mona, Mona…

*Not personally but, you know, I have seen it now a couple of times.*

Yes she was…I told her who I was. Oh she was overjoyed. I knew her mother. We were together.

*So what was the name of the mother just for…*

Lisa. Lisa Jura was her mother’s name. Yeah and her, she is…Mona…

*Golabek.*

Yes. And we're told she made a film afterwards… of all those… that there were two three or four of us who had been in the hostel. And we met next door to the hostel in Willesden Lane… two four five Willesden Lane… and then they took it on film and my cousin in New York went to see her. I'll play and talk to… I said when you look go and see it, tell her who you are. Tell her you… and she left. She sent them a message. She told them to let me know that the film that they are going to make. I mean it's… When we were interviewed as to what has happened. And it's, it must be available fairly soon. They also sold a story to the BBC. It will be on television at one time sometime or other.

*I'm sure. I am sure. But you didn't stay in that hostel?*

Yes, I stayed.

*In the hostel in Willesden?*

Yes I stayed in the hostel….during war. When I came back from 1942. When I came back to London… she was there. She was in the hostel.

*Before then you went off to the farm?*

Oh yes. I went, it was at the end of the war. When I came back to London first I went to the hostel. Yes that was… sort of…Where do you go when you come to London where do you stay. So the hostel was still there. So…

*So but at some point the hostel got- was bombed in the story?*

Yes. In the story it was bombed. It was damaged. It wasn't… the building next door was bombed and something was damaged and in fact her mother lived in Riffel Road where I lived as well. But she was… When I was in Riffel Road, she had already gone back to the hostel, I think. She used to practice in the cellar. We had a piano.

[02:55:04]

*Do you remember that? She was quite a prominent…I mean not prominent…*

She was a very good pianist but she never thought she was good enough to go to the Royal Academy and they persuaded her. Mrs. Cohen whose son was also a good pianist, the blind boy, persuaded her to apply and she was practicing piano. And. And….[inaudible] used to listen… because he was blind. He was a good pianist. He could play chess without feeling the pieces. Was clever and he used to listen to her practicing and criticized and helped her… in some ways you know because ….. a good pianist has to have somebody to listen because they don't hear it themselves if they hear something not quite right. And…yes she… may have an audition and she made it. And I remember she couldn't open the letter. So Mrs. Cohen opened the letter for her and read out for her that said that she had been accepted. Cheer, wonderful.

*What do you think when you first saw the play. What. What do you think?*

It's absolutely correct

All the names that she mentioned, they are the people I knew. She mentions certain names of this one and that one and that and this …all people that I knew. I think it was… And since then she's been here. And she did a- she gave a show…not so long ago, a few months ago at the…Methodist Hall… the Central Hall Westminster.

*Yes.*

And I went to listen to her. I took my grandson along. I persuaded, come along and he was very reluctant, you know. But he humoured his grandpa. He came along. And his reward was he's got a photograph with Mona and him and me. With a photograph of the three of us, so I wasn't, it wasn't, he didn't waste his time -put it that way. Because she is a fine pianist. And yes… I could say she…we were friends.

*So it must be strange... to suddenly, you know, have somebody- see a play where it's… where you recognise…*

She tells, she tells the story.

*... partly your story.*

That's right.

[02:57:28]

When I was…the first time I saw it, somebody who was sitting next to me in the theatre in, in Victoria there.

*Yes. Yes.*

And I said, I said to them, I knew the, her mother. And …oh, got so excited. Yeah. Yeah of course it's, it's a long time ago. Yeah it's all it's, it's, it's, it's, it's I think. Last plays an incredible number of tricks on you know, that somebody somewhere plays chess with you, moves the pieces around or moves from here and there and there. In the end there's a sort of a picture which is quite, quite amazing really. What, what has happened - without trying. Well, I didn't… work at it. Some people plan these things and get there. I never, it never happened. It just, it just happened.

*Yeah so just to…*

Life like with Hugo, the fact that you know Hugo. [inaudible]

*Yeah. That's, that's, that's strange…*

On my I iPad I've got the last photo that we took together.

*Show it to me later.*

Last year, not this year.

Well he died in last December.

*Yeah.*

But…the year before when I was there, we were in, to eat out together. This Ilana who was with my wife and there's one photograph of the three of us have had a, a meal in Netanya. I came up from, from the from, from Tel Aviv.

*Yeah.*

*The… what I wanted to ask a bit more detail about the correspondence with your parents.*

*So what sort of things would they write to you and what… a little…*

Just…they were worried about my well-being main- mainly. You know, they write to me Mrs. So-and-so has heard from her boy that such and such is terrible. He is not happy. He hasn't got this or he didn't get that. Different story, a different life. I didn't have any of those complaints. I was perhaps I was too simple or something, I don't know, but I, I didn't feel that I was sort of hard done by. I wasn't necessarily happy all the time but....Have you seen that Jawne yearbook? That, that one. Well you have to read the story that… Ernest Kolman writes about the time in the hostel and this terrible doctor Seligsohn on what he …how he ill-treated him. And also, you know, when I read it, I said we were in the same place for years, first in the hostel- first at school then in the hostel, then in Bedford. I've got photos still from

somewhere, I don't know where it is now. But we went on holiday together once we had started to work. And his life…he must have a, a chip on his shoulder that is huge. His life was one long misery and he complained how life had been hard on him. He could not accept this fact that life is…

*But it shows that we are all different. And everyone- it is not necessarily the experience…*

The same experience completely different reaction to it.

[03:00:47]

*That's what we see in our interviews…*

Yeah. I'm sure…

*It's not the experience necessarily with shapes...*

Oh yeah, I am quite sure of it. I mean that's obviously so. But he also he comes from Wesel originally and he's been made an *Ehrenbürger* [honorary citizen] from Wesel. He's the last person that is still- survived, the last Jew from Wesel. And he goes there quite frequently. So he has a little bench with a little, a little donkey. You know.

*Yeah. But what I would like to ask you is- at what point… did you think you weren't going to see your parents again. What, what point…*

I don't …that…after the war, when we tried to find out and there was nothing to be found out.

*How did you try to find out?*

You didn't. You asked. There were lists there were...You got in touch with Bloomsbury House or whatever but there was no information of any kind. The first information you had when… my cousins came back… he survived. That was the first thing, we heard that he was the only member of the whole family who actually survived the camps. He was in Bergen-

Belsen. And why did he survive? He had been…a good engineer. He was old enough. He had a, he had a skill and he could use his skill. So with his skill he was able to survive because he was a useful wherever he was. He could survive with this skill and that's what you did. He went to America in the end. And he was a… became a hot water engineer, a central heating engineer. He did very well over there.

[03:02:33]

*But you said you had an uncle here in England.*

Yes.

*Who was the dentist?*

The dentist.

*So he managed to come?*

Well he was going to Israel, to Palestine. He had the certificate to go to Palestine. There was a place called the Kitchener camp here. People who had already visas to go somewhere else were put into the Kitchener camp on a temporary basis until they could. And then of course war broke out and… Israel was…they restricted then the organization said, look, you are okay in England. There are people over here and over there who need to get out of Europe. So you stay here, you are safe. So somebody else went and so eventually in fact he had to study again here to become a dentist.

*And did he?*

He had to…after the war he studied and got his qualification back and then he worked as a dentist.

*And were you in touch with him throughout the war time or…*

Yes… more or less. Until, well when we met again in Bedford, I saw him there of course from time to time.

*He was in Bedford?*

He was in Bedford and when I went, I went to London.

*But was there any – at some point…Was there any thought that you would stay with them or?*

No, it didn't, didn’t arise.

They lived in the same kind of house that I lived in. They rented a couple of rooms. Life was difficult. He was working in a local cinema showing people to their, their seats. He couldn't get a, a decent job.

*Did he come with his children?*

His children came. But he, he came on his own. My aunt, his wife she was…very determined lady. A few days before the beginning of the war she took the children, got herself on the train in Cologne and came to England. When she got here, she had no visa, no permit, anything. She was a dramatic lady, she made a big fuss. Big, big, big, big noise and said my husband is here, I want to join my husband… anyway. They allowed her in with the children.

But...Yes, she was a… She was also a, sort of personality. Difficult lady.

*Yeah. So there was no, they couldn't take you.*

[03:05:00]

Anyway, it was not… it didn't. It didn't happen. But it wasn't, it wasn't, it wasn't offered. I remember when we were going to get engaged. And I said to my wife, I'm going to take her, to introduce you to my uncle and aunt in Bedford. That's what. I had a motorbike, it was in the rain, lousy journey. You got really soaking wet, so she said to me. What happens if they

don't like me? No problem. We won't go and see them anymore. I had no problem with it, you know...But no, no, of course…she was a special person anyway..

*Mm hmm..*

But…she used to [inaudible] as a volunteer at the AJR. She knew Susie of course very well.

*Your wife?*

Yes.

*Yeah.*

And she was a volunteer in Cleve road when they were in Cleve Road still. She was, she was a vol-… She was always there on the Monday. And she was quite ill at that time. She had Parkinson's and she was not well at all. She was the sickest… of all the people who went there. And she was one of the helpers and you… wouldn't have known it. Yeah.

*So I think we'll, we'll talk about how you met your wife and all this here. Next time. Is there anything else you want to add about the war time and the end of the war?*

I don't know. If you lead me, I may remember something. You know, it's sad.

*The main question is that at some point you must have realized that there was nothing to find... about your parents.*

But as I said, it is sort of an area, that took many years to develop. So by the time… You know it's… It doesn't come as a shock anymore. It was something that you accept… as I said, the only, the only member of the whole family who came back and that was my cousin Rudy who went to America.

*And when or when. When did you go back to Cologne the first time?*

I? I went, we went to Cologne. I'll tell you when. I had another cousin of my father's, who'd been a famous politician in Germany. Benno Marx, he was a left wing socialist.

*What's his name?*

Benno, Benno Marx. And he had been… He was the founder or one of the founders of the German bank workers trade union, in Berlin. He worked at a bank. He edited the newspaper for the… trade union. He was a full time organizer for the trade union. So he had three full time jobs. He didn't need very much sleep. And he knew all the British trade unionists, he lived in Golder Green. And we met quite a few of the famous Labour politicians in his house. I've still got some correspondence of his. There was one who was the colonial secretary. His name escapes me and Ellen Wilkinson all the famous left wing… trade union members. He knew them from the International Trade Union movement where he was a prominent member. He married the lady in, in, in Berlin. Who was the prima ballerina of the Berlin Opera. And she got the "Pour le Mérite" [order of merit] from the Kaiser. And I always said to her," I don't want anything from you. I would like to have your "Pour le Mérite", the medal." And in the, in the end somebody else got it. Didn't know what it was, they gave it to the children to play with it and they lost it.

[03:09:14]

But…

*Question is when did you go back to Cologne first?*

In 19- just before I went to Africa. I went just – he had gone over there. By then he was quite a sick man. I said to my wife. We must go and say goodbye to him. I don't know how long whether he will live- or whether we'll see him again. We never did see him again. We were in Cologne for two days, I think. My wife said, I can't stay here. Once you heard the German voices, her hackles rose, she just couldn't cope with it. So we only stayed for two days in 1954.

*And you, what was it like for you?*

It didn't bother me, but she'd been, she'd been in, she had been in Auschwitz. And you remember Irma Grese? She was a famous guard in the c... She knew, she usually…says. She knocked out a few of her teeth at the time. She made, she had the… experience.

*She had a very different experience from you.*

Oh yes. But later on we…she had an aunt who survived the war in Germany. She was married to a non-Jew and they travelled all during the war, they travelled throughout Germany. The moment somebody questioned that she had- didn't have a ration card, they packed up their things and moved on. It was in in Hamburg in the end - we used to go to visit her once a year. Christmas time we spend a week with her in Hamburg. And my wife couldn't speak German there. She had a mental block. She could not speak German in Germany. She was teaching German here. She used to teach children. O and A level German. She was a very good teacher. She could not get a word out over there. It's quite interesting how the mind works. Her aunt got very angry with her, you know, that she couldn't understand, that she wouldn't or couldn't speak German. So. But no… she was a…she…in some of the schools they had- the teacher's teaching was not so good. And she had one particular little girl, Indian girl. The father came to- she was very, very clever. She was good at everything except German, this school in Kenton Yes, in Kenton? And he brought her, he said to her- I was, heard it - says, “if you don't get good marks in German, I'll send you to India to get married. That's it.” And the little girl I don’t know how old she was- twelve thirteen, cried her eyes out. In three months she was top of the class. My wife knew how to teach. Yeah. She had a gift. She taught German to English children here. She's taught English…with the Israeli children who were in West Africa.

*Okay good. We're going to hear much more about this part of your life next time.*

Anyway, that's another- they're all other…

*…another chapter.*

Everything else is, is slightly different. My son said you've got to … I haven't, I haven't written it. I've written some of it. But, it… it persuades me again, I've got to try and finish all that.

*In the meantime I say thank you for part one of this interview. Thank you. My pleasure.*

[03:12:18]

[End of Kurt Marx interview, Part One]

**REFUGEE VOICES**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Interview No.** | RV233 Part Two |
| **NAME:** | Kurt Marx |
| **DATE**: | 29th March 2019 |
| **LOCATION:** | London |
| **INTERVIEWER:** | Bea Lewkowicz |

**[Part Two of Interview]**

[0:00:00]

*Today is the 29th of March 2019 and we are conducting the second part of our interview with Kurt Marx.*

*Could we- in the last- last time we- we got to the end of the war. So, I think we should pick it up just by you telling us what happened to your parents… and what you could find out.*

Right. Well… all we knew that there was no information. There was lots of information at the time- lists were being published- all sorts of things. But anyway, there was no, no - no trace at all. Eventually, there was a- a short list from Cologne I believe, where it said, "*Deported to Minsk and disappeared. No- no- no trace."* It took many years- it was in the 90s- for thirty, forty years later, that we actually discovered what had happened. That they

were taken from Cologne to White Russia [Belarus] at the time. And in White Russia, near Minsk, was a, what was known as an extermination camp, not a concentration camp, they didn't go there to work. They were told they were going to work there, which they believed… But we know now that on arrival, they were taken from the station- from the goods station, straight to the place and… shot, gassed- we don't really know even- we don't even really know that. There are two- two possibilities. You were taken by bus, they were gassed on the way, if- they had had to walk there, the pits were ready for them to be murdered. And that group they were on, that was the only one from Cologne, by the way, that went to Minsk in July 1942. And two- two days after arrival, we know that they were murdered there. And there were about 1200 people on that transport. In fact, that is the only transports to Maly Trostenets where the details are known, because of the book that the Corbachs wrote, that was published, where each and every one who was on that transport is listed in their book, with birth dates, origin and so on.

*One-thousand two-hundred people, you said?*

[00:02:40]

Yes, of- there were quite a lot of children which were in the *Kinderheim* [orphanage] at the time. There were children that had been to my school and the parents and I remember reading somewhere, you mentioned Müngersdorf. In fact, they were informed in Müngersdorf that they had to report at the- in Deutz at the exhibition hall there, at a certain time on the 19th of July. And my father actually wrote to me on the 19th of July, I got a Red- he sent a Red Cross message saying that, "We are leaving tomorrow…" - on the 20th of July. Now, that went via Red Cross, via Switzerland came to England. I probably got it in September. Well, we know now that they were already killed at the end of July – 24th or 25th of July they were already dead. That's what we know now, because it's all- it came out of the archives. The archives were found. There was a university professor in Bonn, I think, or in Cologne, and he got all the information from the authorities when people were leaving. He was studying movements of people in Europe. So, he got- each time a transport left Cologne, he got the information. And in this book that the Corbachs wrote – or, it was the archives that they had copied - it showed you all the transports that left Cologne to all the various camps wherever it was, Auschwitz, wherever - it's all listed. And in Minsk, that is the only information they had over

there, where they had the detail of the people who had come there. None other - it's quite interesting.

*So, Kurt, what- tell us a little bit what you established. What happened to them while they were still in Cologne? They had to leave their flat?*

[00:04:46]

Well, they lived in their flat. Then they had to leave it because they were directed to another- they actually had a flat somewhere and then they had to move there. There was- I forget, I think it was Lochnerstraße there was a - what was known as a *Judenhaus*. There was somebody who had a large flat and they were allocated a room in that flat. In fact, I saw it when I was over there. They showed it to me where it was - not far from the Lützowstraße, in fact, where the school had been. And then from there, eventually they finished up in Müngersdorf in this- these were the old… What were they? They were the old… barracks that soldiers- the soldiers used to have barracks in Müngersdorf on the outside of the town. Apparently, after the war it was used by the Belgians, to have their troops there; they were housed in these same old buildings.

*And what was it? A concentration camp?*

No, no, it was a- it was just the old barracks, the- the old… a-a-accommodation for the- that had been used by the German Army originally. And they were vacated, or they were empty by then and they had the space to put these people in there. What they had there- we don't really know whether they had the room, or how they lived in there, but for quite some time.

*But was it a sort of holding place, or was it a camp or?*

They were directed to live there. That's where they- that's the only place. There were some who lived on the outside of town, some lived inside. There was an area- I saw on the various lists that there was a concentration of people in certain parts of the city.

*Right. And you said that they were not allowed to take the tram?*

Well, at that time Jews were not allowed to use public transport of any kind. They had their- by that time they couldn't have bicycles, they couldn't have radio, they couldn't have anything. They couldn't have a typewriter. All these things were- they had to hand in and as they were good Germans, they did. And- transport they weren't allowed to use. Certainly not.

*But do you think they were still moving in and out from Müngersdorf? There was?*

They were- they were- they must have been working somewhere. I supp- yes, I'm sure- they were directed- they were using these people to do whatever work they were directed to.

*And from there, they went then to-*

[00:07:20]

From there, they had to report at the *Messe* at the time. And there was, again, a holding area, when they had an- the required number of people they had to- in one of the reports it said they had to present them… with a whole list of their possessions. And with the hand- handing over, the last thing they had to hand over was the key to their apartments, which then- that was the complete- and they got a receipt for all this. You know, they- it was all done very officially, officially - efficiently. So, everybody felt, "Well, they had a receipt for their goods. So, if you get a receipt, presumably you may get it back if you have a receipt." Then they were sent- and they had to pay for the journey, of course. They had to pay fifty marks per person, which was a lot of money at the time, to take the train to Minsk to be murdered. And the- and interestingly enough, I saw the other day, that the Dutch railway, is repaying the money that people had paid for these journeys. Because the railway benefitted. I never heard this being done in Germany. But we know that they had to pay for their journey.

*To the Deutsche Bahnhof?*

To whoever. They were sold the tickets for the train. They had a seat on the train with a ticket. So, everything - as far as they were concerned - was perhaps fairly normal. You buy your ticket, you get on a train and you travel…

*Yeah… And do you still have that- that letter from your father? That-?*

Yes. Oh, yes, I’ve got the- the Red Cross letter. You know. That was the last message I had, and I probably got it in September. And it was the last time I heard from them. And until, I think when the book was published, or there was a German one as well, that was published with all the names, but not- not all that much earlier, in the 90s. 1990s some time.

*But was that important for you to see the names, to-?*

Well, at least- at least you knew what had happened. I mean, one had had to assume, of course - they didn't come back, one didn't hear - they had lost their lives somewhere or other. After all, what one did hear about the various camps and so on-

*I mean, do you remember, after the war, was there a certain point where you said to yourself, they must have died?*

[00:10:04]

No, I didn't. I don't think that was a- well, you… you accepted the fact that obviously they weren't around anymore because you didn't- I mean the only one in our family who actually survived was one of my cousins. Of the whole- of all those that had been deported, he, in fact, they were sent- the family was sent to Riga originally, and eventually finished up in Bergen-Belsen. And he survived. And after the war, he and one or two of his friends they had a transport business in - in the Eifel. And we have a picture- he sent us a picture from there. It's- you couldn't get petrol anything. It had a- they their produced the gas with a coal burner for the engine of the motor, that's what they had at the time. So- so they had- one used to drive, the other one was on the back of the lorry, putting- firing this boiler, which produced the gas. [laughs]

*So, he went back?*

He went back for a while. And then… my aunt, my father's- my father's sister and his mother's sister, said, “Come to America.” And they organised his coming to America and he lived there ever since. Or he's also passed away there- was older than I. But he had been an

engineer and I suppose that's why he survived. He was a useful… person who could work and he had a skill. And yes, he lived- well, he died three or four years ago.

*No, I asked you about your parents and the date, because something which came up is you know whether- did you say Kaddish for them, for example? And what date would you say that? You know?*

[00:10:04]

Well, that's right. I mean, not knowing where or what. But once I discovered this, and then I managed to go to Minsk, which was interesting. There was a lady living in this building, who came from place called Kommen . And there was a- a German teacher - was retired. He was writing the story of the Jews in Kommen and he came here to interview her. I met him. And I told him what I knew. And he says, "One can't go to Belarus because it's a communist dictatorship, you couldn't go there. Unless you had an invitation, you couldn't go." So how do you get an invitation? So, he said, "Well, the cathedral in Cologne, the Catholic… Church, had a contact with Belarus." Some educational contact. And they had people going there. And he says, "Perhaps I can arrange for you to go with one of their groups." And we had arranged it all then at the last moment, they told me, "Sorry. We have a limited number and there's no room for you." A few weeks later, he rang me. "We can get an invitation and you can go." This was beginning of October. I said, "October in Russia? Isn't it too cold?" He says, "No, it's still at the beginning of the season, it will still be OK." So, within a week, I went to Cologne. He picked me up at the airport. I stayed with them - they lived in the Eifel somewhere - for a couple of nights. Then he took me to Frankfurt to the airport. And he came with me to Minsk. At Minsk we were met by a couple of interpreters who spoke German and Russian. A taxi. And we were taken everywhere. Everything that was worth seeing, they thought was interesting. So that's the first time I went- I went to Maly Trostenets.

*And when was that?*

[00:14:10]

Five or six years ago? I don't know the exact date. Yes, it must have been six years ago.

And at that time, there was no indication to show you where it was. You had to know where it was. You went up a dirt track. There was a- a rubbish dump. Because they- the, the Russians had tried to hide it. They didn't want to acknowledge that it was even there. We had to climb over this rubbish dump and we got to the actual place where- was a small memorial there.
And that was- as I said, that was the first time where I was at the place where it had happened. So, I said that I could say Kaddish for the first time, at the place of where it all happened. Which was rather important. But since then, these same people have organised one- an amazing memorial in Maly Trostenets, which was part of it, and a place called Blagovshchima now, where it actually happened. And I attended this opening of it. And the German President and Austrian President and the Russian President – they were all there. People from all over Europe were there, Press, TV. It was very important. And so now maybe it will become known and people will visit and they will know. It's- it's like a- according to the Germans, it was the largest extermination camp in Russia. They talk up to a quarter of a million people. They didn't work there. They were taken there to be murdered. Nothing - nothing else. No- not 'worked to death' or anything or 'starved to death'. No, they were there. And …they were saying in this- did you ever see that film "*Die vergessenen Kinder von Köln*"? I was going to get you a copy of it. I haven't got a copy yet. And in there it says that- in fact, the small children, the babies were just thrown into the pits and they shot them from- from the outset. They weren't even killed. They were just- it was unbelievable.

[00:16:30]

*You're going to show some photos at the end.*

Yes, yes.

*But just to go back to- you were, you were- you came back to London because you were- one year you were doing some-?*

Yes, I was working on a farm.

*On the farm, yes. So, you came back?*

I came back and I went back to-

*And how did you - continue?*

Well, I came back. I came back- it was the last year of the war. I came back to London and I lived in a hostel in Willesden Lane, where the- there was the lady who became famous because of '*The Pianist of Willesden Lane'*-

*Yes.*

She was- she was one of the-

*You told us- we talked about that.*

… girls there. And after- once I had found my feet again in London, I moved out and shared a room with a friend of mine. And I went back to my- to polishing diamonds, which I had learned how to do.

*And at that point was that- did you still have hope that your parents would be alive? Or did it become quite-?*

No, no. I wouldn't- I did not think. No, there was no, this was- by that time it was a year after the war. There was no indication. In fact, it was highly unlikely because- as we had heard from my cousin. And he, sort of indicated that he didn't think anybody had survived as far as he knew. And one didn't know, because people just- appeared in some cases from nowhere, you know. Some people had survived, but in this case, it was- of all the family of my mother's side, not one of them survived. In fact, I'm the only survivor of that branch of the family.

[00:18:15]

*And on your father's side, your uncle-?*

Well, my father's side- they were more forward looking. Two- two- one uncle and aunt and one uncle went to Israel- to Palestine, at the time before the war. My uncle managed to come to England because he had a certificate to go to Palestine, but he came to England first.

*He was the dentist?*

That's right. The other uncle, the butcher, the sons had gone to America already before the war in 1939. And the parents managed to get via Spain, to Cuba in 1941- I think. They'd managed to get out of Cologne and somehow or other- I'm sure he paid a lot of money to get out, but he managed to get to- to Spain, from Spain to Cuba and from Cuba, once their son was in the American Army, they went to the States.

*So, were you in touch with that part of the family after the war? Did they find you?*

Yes, sure- they- they knew where I was and- yes, we intermittently. I'm not a great communicator, so…

[00:19:33]

*And were you thinking of joining them then in America, or-?*

No- no. There was never any thought about that. …Well, I wasn't, of course I wasn't married, but soon afterwards I met my wife, who had been in Auschwitz. She came back- she came to England after the war in 1945. She was here quite early, because she was in Switzerland and had a sister here. And they found her sister and she came here. And she was also in *Bar Kochba* which was the youth organisation which she had looked for. She was a good gymnast, so she had been a good gymnast and she was still very good.

*Tell us about Bar Kochba – what was it?*

*Bar Kochba*? …Is an overall, what is called the Maccabi Association which was a Jewish… sports club in- on the Continent. You had it in Vienna. You had it everywhere in Vienna; *Bar Kochba Wien* was a famous football team in its time. But in- we were- we had our Hakoah in Cologne. And actually, my uncle had been the Chairman of the club in Cologne. And I was

reason- I was very small, but I was quite good at it. And… so when I came here, I was looking for a youth club of some sort. Anyway, it was- I found Maccabi but Maccabi we're not so keen on taking… immigrants, foreigners, whatever we were. They advised me, "Why don't you join *Bar Kochba?"* You know: "That's where all the other Continentals are." So, they were Czechs, and Austrians and German origin. So that's where I- yes, I- I joined it.

*And what sport did you do for Bar Kochba?*

I was an athlete.

*Right.*

And a gymnast. I was quite- I mean, when I was little, I could jump my own height. I don't know how that was possible, but I did.

*And you said the Maccabi were not so keen on the Continentals?*

No. No, no…

*Tell us a little bit.*

It's a sad story, but it's everywhere. New immigrants are never liked, whether you come from Poland into Germany, or from Germany into England, or from England to America!

[00:20:00]

*What did they tell you?*

Well, they thought I would be happier somewhere else. They didn't say, "Get out of here", but they weren't particularly keen on having a refugee. That's what I was as far as they were concerned.

*And where were the meetings of Bar Kochba?*

In Eton Avenue - in Swiss Cottage. We had our- we had a house there. In the house were several rooms- kind of- well, a big- they were biggish houses. Big, old houses.

*What number Eton Avenue, do you remember?*

Fifty-seven.

*So people were living there as well?*

No, no, no. It was a-it was- each room was given- one was for *Bar Kochba*. The other one wasPo'laei Zion and various Zionist organisations had a room in this building. And in the basement was a restaurant, a kosher restaurant. And I- they served Continental food and I used to go and eat there. So that's quite interesting. And I- I went there quite regularly because it was food that I- I knew. I remembered. I enjoyed it.

*Who ran it?*

Pardon?

*Who ran that restaurant?*

Well, that was interesting. One day, the lady- there were two ladies who were partners. One was called Mrs. Mutters- and they were- that's another story. And my- and Miss- and Miss Marx. Miss Marx - Johanna Marx. I got a- I got a photo of the other day. She looked out of their- out of the kitchen into the restaurant and she saw me sitting there. And she asked one of the waitresses, "Ask him whether his name is Marx." So, she said, "He's one of the boys. He always comes here." But anyway, she asks- she asked me and I said, "Yes". She recognised me, because she had known my father as a young man. They were cousins, or second cousins. So, I got a new family, so to speak. She had a brother here.

[00:24:03]

*So, she was also Marx?*

Yes, she was Miss Marx and her brother was Benno Marx.

*We didn't discuss it; you had- it’s quite a famous name – Marx.*

Yes, Marx. Yes. Well Benno Marx- they all came originally from a place called Weilerswist, which is… not far from Cologne. It's where the Marx family originated. Or- at a certain time. He had become- he was a trade unionist. He was the… He founded the trade union for bank employees in Germany. And he was very busy with international trade unionism. And when all this happened- when Hitler came to power, he just managed to get away to England. Only just. They came in at the front door and he jumped out of the window at the back. But he came to England. And he had married- his wife had been Gudrun Hildebrandt, who was a famous dancer. She was the prima ballerina of the German Opera in Berlin.
And she got the “Pour le Mérite” from the Kaiser. And I always told her, I said, “I don't want anything from you, but I would like that medal.” But I never got it because in the end, somebody else got it who didn't even know what it was. They gave it to the children to play with and they lost it. I mean - very sad. But she was quite a famous lady. She used to come to London. They used to call her the ‘German Pavlova’ in her time. She danced for one or two nights at the London Palladium - on her own on that huge stage. Her brother used to come and play piano and she danced.

[00:25:50]

*What was her name?*

Hildebrandt- Gudrun Hildebrandt.

*Was she Jewish?*

No, she wasn’t Jewish. But she married this famous politician.

*And they came both here?*

They came here. They came to England. She had a dancing school in Golders Green. She used to teach British film stars who had dancing parts in films and they used to come to her to

be trained to take these parts. So, I had a- I got a new family, you know, who I had never known.

*Marx. And were you related to Karl Marx? You said before…*

There was a relationship, yes. Because when you look at the map, Karl Marx was in Trier. We lived in Cologne. The first member of our- on our family tree came from… Königswinter. And Weilerswist is in the centre of this triangle. So, we know that they were all related to each other. And they went in different directions from this place. And in Weilerswist I went- somebody took me to the local cemetery. Half the- half the gravestones have 'Marx' on them.

*Right.*

From way back.

[00:27:07]

*So, you- Karl Marx was-*

Karl Marx was-

*A cousin, or-*

Was the red sheep in the family. [laughs] But it was- they were third, fourth cousins; I'm not quite sure. But it's, it's- it's… But Benno Marx we met at that time. Well, I was married already. In 1949- 1950 we met. All the trade unionists who were of stature here used to meet- we used to meet them at his house, you know.

*Where did they live?*

In Finchley Road in Golders Green. And we met Ellen Wilkinson- [British Labour Party politician who served as Minister of Education from July 1945] and- I forget all the various names. But all the trade unionists of that time who were in the government here, were friends

of his. Aneurin Bevan, [Welsh Labour Party politician] Ernest Bevin [British trade union leader, and Labour politician] as well. He didn't- wasn't so fond of Bevin. But I've still got a- a letter somewhere. His name escapes me for the minute. He was the Colonial Secretary- John… I've got it somewhere. Well, he was telling him what Great Britain should do in Germany, after the war. And he, when war was over, tried to go back to Germany, to Cologne. Get back into the politics. And the Americans took him off the train and brought him back here. They wouldn't allow him to go back to Germany. Because of his- he was well known. They offered him an important job at the United Nations in New York. And he wouldn't take it. If he can't go to Germany he wasn't interested in the United Nations. He was quite a- quite a character.

*They didn't want him in Germany?*

Pardon?

*They didn't-?*

He wanted to go to Germany. He want- he wanted to reorganise the politics and government in Germany.

*And why would the Americans not want that?*

Because they were- he was a left-wing…

*Yeah, too left-wing.*

… socialist. He was a lovely- he was a little man.

[00:29:26]

*Just going back now. So, you went to Bar Kochba. Were- were you familiar with the other sort of the refugee organisations in NW3?*

No.

*Did you go to the caf- the coffee shops in the Finchley Road and the-?*

Well, I knew them, but in those days, we were all very poor. After being in the club, we used to go to a place called Cosmo. About six of us, and we had four cups of coffee, you know. Couldn't afford six cups.

*Tell us about The Cosmo. What was it?*

Cosmo was a- a restaurant. A Continental restaurant. In fact, in later years, you saw that photograph on the stage. With somebody doing the handstand on the parallel bars. He eventually bought the Cosmo. It belonged- he was a fruit importer, but he made money and that was one of his- his businesses.

*What was his name?*

Good question. I don’t know.

*Was it Manheimer? Manheimer? By any chance?*

Manheimer, yes. Adi Manheimer. You knew about Adi Manheimer? You knew his wife?

*Yes.*

And his sister- her sister. There were two sisters. …I mean they- I’ve still got a photograph somewhere, where the two sisters are there in their early days when they were. I mean they were perhaps ten years older than I am. But we were- Bar Kochba- we went on holiday together a whole group of us and the two of them were there. Before she was married.

*And it was quite close the Bar Kochba to the Cosmo.*

Yes. Yes.

*And tell us, can you describe the Cosmo? What it looked like or what the food was like?*

The food was Continental food, you know.

*So? Go on…what was it?*

[00:31:07]

I don't know, I didn't- I didn't- I couldn't afford to eat there. I used to eat in Eton Avenue. But it was Viennese-style food. I suppose you could get a schnitzel there or whatever. They had beautiful- wonderful cakes and what-have- but it was- it was very popular in its time…

*But you…*

It was quite a large restaurant.

*… couldn't afford it.*

We had just as I said, there were six of us. We had four coffees and two glasses of water. [laughs]

*And what was-?*

That was before Adi Manheimer owned it. By that time, we had all sort of managed to- we weren't that poor anymore. Put it that way.

*And did you continue to go there, once it-?*

No.

*No.*

I mean if you were- lived locally, you went there, there was another one called… oh dear. Balsam, later on, it was known as The Dorice. And I remember Dorice when she was a

waitress at Balsam. So that's going back when he owned it. He later on had a club in the West End somewhere. And she bought the, I think must have bought the business off him. So, it, yes it was a- it was a close- close community, but I was too young. I mean, we- I was really English rather than- rather than a refugee you know.

*So, the Balsam became The Dorice?*

Yeah. And…

*And was it a bit cheaper than the Cosmo? Was that more affordable?*

[00:32:35]
I don't know. I- I wouldn't know. As I say, I didn't go- I used to eat in Eton Avenue. When I ate here, I ate in Eton Avenue.

*So, in Bar Kochba, in that restaurant, what was the food there? What did you eat?*

That was… whatever- whatever mother used to make, I don't know. But it was- it was familiar. It wasn't a…a shepherd's pie. And it wasn't sausages and mash, you know, it was, whatever, whatever one used to eat. What you may have eaten in Cologne, you know, it was…

*Such as?*

I don't remember. I really- it's- it's not- it doesn't somehow figure it all. It's- but it was, it was familiar. This is- *Königsberger Klopse [meat balls in white sauce]*, for instance. Just as an example. You wouldn't get it anywhere else except on the Continent. And when we were in Berlin some years ago with the U3A [University of the Third Age], we were- we had a short week there where we went to see all the various things. And I don't know whether you- did you know Ludwig – Ludwig… Oh dear… He was a- what's his name now? Can't remember. It's terrible… memory…

*Yeah, I think I know who you mean.*

His son was the, at the Wiener Library. Spiro – Ludwig Spiro. He came along with us, because the Kaufman father was coming but he couldn't make it so Ludwig came in his stead. And we told him we were going to eat somewhere, so he said, “All right, I'll come along with you.” Because he always was off on his own. But- says, “Why don't you join us?” And they had *Königsberger Klopse*. I said, “I must have that.” And I was so disappointed. It wasn't as it should have been. So, you- you remember certain things.

[00:34:37]

*Yeah – yeah…*

I was with some, at some English friends of mine. They came along as well. And we were in the Große Hamburger Straße [Berlin Mitte]. You know, where the old-age home had been. Große Hamburger Straße is quite narrow. And at the end of the road was a, a- a pub, I suppose, of some sort. And they had *Pfifferlinge* [chanterelles- mushrooms] which I hadn't seen since those days- with scrambled eggs. And I told my friends, “You've got to try this.” Never had it before. And yes, of course, they enjoyed it. Because you can't get *Pfifferlinge* here for some reason or other. You don't get these kinds of mushrooms here.

*And you enjoyed it?*

Yes, I- I- that's something, again, it's a sort of a memory, you know. You remember it and it- must have it.

*So, Kurt, did you meet your wife at Bar Kochba?*

Well, that was- you see, sometimes things are preordained. Because they wouldn't have me in *Maccabi*, I joined *Bar Kochba*. And when my wife came here, she also joined *Bar Kochba*. And that's where we met. And… that was in 1946- ‘7, I suppose. We got married in 1948. She wanted to go to Israel. But she wasn't well, for some reason. She had a scholarship but they wouldn't take her, because she had to have a- had a- gallstones, which was an after-effect of the camp that she'd been in. And so, she stayed here. Then she got married and then this was… forgotten about anyway.

*So, when you got married, did you have family present, or who was on- on her-?*

It was- her- her mother was there. Her sister, brother-in-law. My uncle and aunt. The new Uncle Benno and- they were all- I've- I've still got photos of our engagement, marriage. And…

*You were still- You were quite young.*

Yes, I couldn't wait. I was- I wasn't twenty-three yet, when we got married. But there was no reason to wait for… We, you know, things were different. Our life was not a normal life…in that sense. Although I had a flat, I shared with a friend of mine. So, we- we- and she stayed with her sister. But there was no- no reason at all, once we had decided to do this, not to do it, you know. Nothing to wait for. And, and we got- we lived in two rooms. At those- in those days it was very difficult to find accommodation in London. People used to pay… key money to get a room somewhere. You had to pay fixtures and fittings. There was a hook on the wall you pay- you have to pay 200 pounds for that, just to be able to find a place. And her sister had a sort of boarding house. She looked after elderly people in her- she had a nice house by then.

[00:37:55]

And the local greengrocer had just bought a house which had two- was built on three floors, had two upper rooms under the attic, but they were nice rooms. So, we rented those rooms. So, we had somewhere to live - until he made enough money as a greengrocer and didn't want us anymore. And then he made life very difficult for us. So…which wasn't very nice. They weren't kind about it. They couldn't get rid of us because you were a ten- if you had an empty flat, you had- they could not get- get rid of you. You were protected- a protected tenant, so you…But it was, if we had mail it was on the on the mat. If it was raining, they would walk on it. You know, they were…Bath night, they used to light a boiler to have hot water, but only just for themselves. There was never any hot water. So- eventually, we managed to buy a little house.

*Where?*

In Mill Hill. Mill Hill East… which was- yes it was with great difficulty. We couldn't afford it. So, we had to let the room to help pay for the mortgage. But that's- that's what's happened to many people. So, we all struggled. She worked. I worked. And between us-

*So, you were doing the diamond cutting?*

I was polishing diamonds at the time.

*And where- where?*

In Hatton Garden.

*And what was she doing?*

Pardon?

*What was your wife-?*

[00:39:35]

She was a- well, after the war she came here. Didn't speak any English, but she was a- a linguist. She picked it up very, very quickly. Surprising how- how well- how good her English was when I first met her. She had only been here for a few months. And she worked for a firm in… Fleet Street. But as she- her English wasn't very good, but they were very kind people. They employed her- a Jewish firm. He says, “Well, you can get a job working in the packing department” - which was in the basement, packing the goods which were being sent off. So, she started there. And then she had a number tattooed on her arm, which she didn't want. So, when she was in hospital, she asked whether it could be removed, and they actually- she had quite a big scar there. And when she went back to work, she still had this bandage on there. And they said, “Well, it's not a good idea for her to work in that dusty packing department. You better come into the office.” And she started there as a lowly clerk. And within six months, she was in charge of the office… because she had had some training in Germany. And she was very bright. And she was the bookkeeper and she used to pay the- the representatives the travellers. And she was very much resented by the rest of the staff but

she could. She was able.

*So, Kurt, in those early days where it was financially quite difficult, did you receive any other support or help from any other organisations?*

No. No I- I never received any support and I never asked for any support and I never wanted any support. I was fairly independent, and it wasn't necessary, or I didn't- I wasn't somebody to ask for things.

*And did you join a synagogue or did you join- or did you stay-?*

[00:41:38]

Yes. Well, we got married in the synagogue.

*Which synagogue?*

In Dollis Hill, the United synagogue. And, yes, we- I, I- I ran across the cost of the party we had. There was a synagogue hall. That's where we had our… party afterwards. And it cost us four shillings and sixpence per person. Four shillings and sixpence… which is what? It's nothing. Twenty-five pence per person. We had a tea dance. So, what's-? Everybody was poor, nobody had anything. It's always interesting…when everybody is in the same situation, it doesn't trouble you. We were all… managing somehow, you know, but that's- only just. There were some who had already been very successful. But the majority of people- I remember my mother had a friend who lived here in London. Shows you what- how people influence you. And they were in touch with each other and she's written to her: "Whatever you do, don't come to England. You'll have to scrub people's floors here. Because that's the only kind of work you can get."

[00:43:08]

So, they didn't come. So, they waited to go to America. They might have been able to get here on a domestic visa. But she had- so anyway, I met- I didn't know that until much later. Anyway, I met them. They were working in- living in Swiss Cottage somewhere. They

invited me, were very kind – I had tea there. And he asked me, “Are you all right?” You know, people are concerned of course. And at that time, I was earning relatively good money compared to others. Not in- in the diamond trade as such I wasn't earning such a lot of money. But other people were, whatever they were doing, not earning very much. So, I told them what I was earning. I was quite- I had no- didn't even think about it. I'm sure they must have thought I was the biggest liar under the sun. I must have been earning twice as much as he was. And he was a man of experience. And here was this young boy telling him he was earning that kind of money. So, they never asked me again. But it didn't trouble me.
But…and I didn't realise where we shared the room with this friend of mine and I. They lived in- these people lived on the top floor in one of these tall houses, near Swiss- near Swiss- near Finchley Road Station. They had two rooms and the kitchen. I can't remember a bathroom, there wasn't a bathroom. And… they lived in the one room as a bedsitting room for themselves. And they let the other room to the two boys. Because they couldn't afford the two rooms; they couldn't pay. So that's how- and they were both working. But people were earning very little. One doesn't realise how little people were earning here at that time.
But that, that meant- they all managed somehow or other. I mean, it was a flat which didn't- wasn't a self-contained flat. It was…You went up the stairs on one floor and another floor. But everything was- it was a house with two floors. They had the top floor.

[00:45:18]

*But you managed to buy a little house in Mill Hill?*

Well, we- we got a mortgage together and as we were both working, we- we got a- I remember even what it cost and what we couldn't afford. It cost us thirteen pounds and so many pennies a month in repayments. And we had to let a room because we couldn't really afford it. I mean you had to have insurance and all the other things. But the actual mortgage repayments were thirteen pounds. But that was a lot of money. …And… But- yes, I mean, she had to go to work. It's- I mean, I used to- when I lived in Willesden Green and I worked in Hatton Garden, I used to get an early morning return train on the Metropolitan line, which was sixpence halfpenny, which is like three pence a return trip on the underground. Today it costs you a few pounds. Then it was a few pennies. But- it's relative to what you were earning you know you weren't earning anything, and the cost of living was… cheap. A large loaf you paid four pence for. Two pence for big loaf! Today it costs you a pound? Or more? They tell

you what your money's worth. It's worth nothing compared to what it was worth then. You could buy a big house in Swiss Cottage for 500 pounds. Today they're worth millions. It's-it's, it's crazy.

*But then you- an opportunity came up for you and-*

Oh, yes. Well, I was working. I worked for somebody, and I worked for myself; I had my own workshop. And I met a lady who had been the secretary of the company I'd worked for many years earlier. And she said, "I wanted to find you. I didn't know where you were." She said she was working for a Belgian company. And they had got a licence to buy diamonds in the Gold Coast at the time – a British colony. Says, "We need somebody to go out, would you go out for us?"

[00:47:38]

Said, "I didn't really know, I mean-" I told my wife. She says, "Why do you want to go away?" You know- "We're alright here. We've got the house. We're making a living. Go to Africa?" But anyway, I spoke to various people I knew and… my friend said to me, he was logical to me. He says, "Go and try it. If you don't like it, you come back. What you're doing now you can do when you- if after a month or two you don't- you find it's not what you want, you tell them 'Climate is too bad, I can't take it' - finished. They can't stop you. Can't give you a contract because if you become ill, you can't do it." So, I took his advice. I left everything- told my customers, "I'll be away for a few months. Let you know when I'm back." And that was the beginning of working there for seven years. My wife came out and join me after three months. We had an arrangement. Either you stay if you want to, or we want you or if you don't, you know, it was a trial period. And yes, I thought this was a good idea. And it was the- one of the important moves I made… in my whole life I suppose. That I got away from the bench and we- we had a big operation there. It was so big I never dared tell anybody. They would never have believed me.

*In terms of value?*

Pardon?

*In terms of value?*

Value, and we had a-

*Volume.*

I had- I had about ten people in the office. Clerks and interpreters and accountants and God knows what.

*And Kurt, were you British by then?*

Yes. Yes.

*When did you receive your naturalisation?*

[19]'46, '47 – around that time.

*And was that important for you – to…?*

Of course, I mean, I didn't have any- all I had was a… a… I didn't have a passport of any kind. So, you had to have some documentation. I mean that I didn't want to be German. Obviously. I didn't- my German passport- I still have the passport, I think. But, but that's- once when I applied for British nationality, they wanted it and somehow, I never got it back. So…

[00:50:09]

*So, you went to the Gold Coast. You were British.*

So, I went to the Gold Coast. I was an Englishman. And in, in- on- in the Gold Coast- Gold Coast at that time was a black country with a few British civil servants. And a few traders which came- who came from everywhere: from Syria, from Lebanon, from- from South Africa. There were only very few white people there. There was one Jewish doctor. I can't remember his name now. Nice man. He had been of Polish origin, became a doctor in Berlin.

Came here. Joined the British Army, was a doctor in the British Army all during the war. And when he wanted to come- when he came back, when he was de-mobbed, he wanted to become a- be- practice in England, he wasn't allowed to. But they said, “You can go to the colonies as a doctor.” So, he went to the Gold Coast. And he was a good doctor. And he was one of the few white people there, you know.

*So, were you part of a sort of ex-pat community, or?*

Yes, we were, of course we were. But at the same time, every time somebody important came to Ghana, to, to, to Gold Coast the Governor General, being the representative of the Queen

would invite the whole British colony. As there weren’t so many of us, we were always invited. So, it was like a Queen's garden party every other week. No, not quite as often. If somebody of importance came, which- they had a party at the Governor's castle, we were invited, so it was interesting. Then the Israelis came. Same story. What do the Israelis do? The first thing they do is look for Jews. There were not very many Jews there, so they found all the Jews. So, every time somebody of importance came to the Israeli embassy, we were invited. So, we met Golda Meir and all the various ministers of government and so on. Everybody's- every time somebody important came, they had a dinner party, we were invited to the dinner party. So, we had quite an interesting… life outside of work.

[00:52:36]

My wife eventually used to teach the Israeli children English. In England, she taught the English children German. My colleague who came from Belgium whose wife only spoke Flemish, and the very low-grade Flemish, not a very sophistic- my wife learned to speak Flemish in the year. And when we were in Belgium, they didn't believe that she didn't come from Belgium. I mean, she had this gift of picking up languages - quite amazing.

*So, it was an interesting time.*

It was very- we had a very- I've never worked so hard, ever, as I did at that time. Climate. We worked all the hours of daylight, because we were- it was- I mean it was an operation. I didn't realise until we got there what- until I got there, nobody really realised how- how big it was

going to become. The Africans used to come out of the bush, bring us their diamonds. We used to go- on a Sunday went into the bush to make us- to show our faces to the people who were bringing the diamonds to the labourers who worked in the bush- I mean that was 'bush', you know; trees were 100 foot high. And we- we used to walk for an hour into the bush to look at the operation. And then the diggers, who were working up to their waist in water looking for these diamonds and digging and what-have-you. When they saw us that gave them confidence to give the diamonds to their employer. It was a… Yes, it was a very exciting period.

*And did you ever have any problems did- being- not 100% Brit- I mean, did anyone- did you ever have any discrimination because you- your background, or-?*

No. I mean the English civil servant who was- who consider themselves upper-class type of person- well, 'anybody who isn't one of us is one of them', you know, so- but we didn't have this. We were traders, which I mean, traders are always sort of a step below. But no, we had- we had no problems in that direction. No, we had- we had a- we had a good relationship. Well, they didn't last very long anyway. We got there. I got there in beginning of 1955. But within six months all the British civil servants had been kicked out.

*Right.*

After independence.

*So, you stayed on?*

[00:55:28]

Oh, yes, we were there for many years- well, for seven years all. We got there in 19- beginning of '55 and left the end of '61. So, it was a…And we used to come home once a year, once every fifteen months or so for a couple of months, if- you had to recover. You know, in the tropics, your resistance goes down and down and down. Your blood gets thinner, you catch more colds and coughs and what-have-you. Malaria, whatever was going, you would get then. And after a couple of months in England, you recovered and your body sort of rejuvenated and we went back again.

*So, you'd come back regular- regularly?*

Oh, yes. I mean, you had to; you couldn't, I mean you couldn't stay there. It was, the climate is… And we didn't have air conditioning in those early days. And it was just. I mean, if you're young, it's all right. I mean, after having played- worked all day, we still had a sort of an hour’s daylight left. We used to go and play tennis, you know. And then drank gallons of liquid to replace the sweat. It used- you know, it’s- it’s a. But it was- well, in the house of course, we had all our so-called servants. We had a steward boy, we had somebody to clean, cook, - cook, washman, driver, gardener, you know, all the various things that you can't- you can't do in that climate. You just cannot do it. I remember the Israeli prospective Ambassador, when he came out, we met him. Turned out that he came from Cologne originally and was a friend of my cousin’s. But that had- that was purely accidental.

[00:57:18]

And he was rushing around and we told him, “Hanan, don't run around like this. You can't do it here.” He says, “Look, don't tell me. We live in, in- in Israel! We know.” I says, “All right.” I says, “We have warned you.” After two weeks, he was exhausted - heat exhaustion. There wasn't enough oxygen. You can't run. You have to walk slowly. You've got to take it easy. So, later on he admitted, “You were right.” You know, you can't- you can't do what you can do in Israel- you can't do in the tropics, not on the equator, not with that humidity.

*So which city? Where was it? Where were you?*

Accra.

*In Accra.*

Yes, it was- it was a… It was an interesting time. We went up country. We went into the bush. We- there weren't- people who used… I had- one man, he used to come back and tell fairy stories. I was once in the Diamond Club and he was there and he was telling them all about this tiger and the lions. There were no tigers. There were no lions. A snake, maybe. A

bush baby, perhaps? Scorpions… all sorts of creepy crawly things, big spiders, but certainly no lions and no tigers. But…

*Yeah…*

But people… didn't know.

*And how did the time then come to an end in Accra?*

Time came to an end after nearly seven years. In the meantime, my son was born. And we were lucky in a way that we had befriended the doctor of the- British Army doctor, who was in charge of the contingent that was still there. And he said to us, "In the first place, he must have a…" Polio vaccine had just become available. "If you can bring me ten people, your wife is pregnant, it's better if you have the vaccine." So. People were only too pleased; you couldn't get it at that time. It was at the early stage. So, we all had polio vaccination. And he says, "And you don't have the baby here. If everything is fine, no problem. But if there are complications, we haven't got the facilities here." So, we went home. My son was born in London. And then when he was about three months old, took him back in a carrier cot. But it's not the climate to take a baby to. He didn't get malaria, but it's- it's difficult. But he was, he was, he was fine, I mean… we used to get malaria from time to time.

[01:00:09]

But we were supposed to- had arranged already that we would be leaving when he was about one year old. And somebody else was coming to - not replace me, to - be an additional person in the office. For some reason or other there was trouble with his visa. He didn't come, so I stayed until he came. Two weeks before he came, we were at a garden party at the Israeli embassy. And there are flies and things and we ate something. My wife ate something. She must have eaten some contaminated food. She got polio… which wasn't very fun. We were lucky we had the vaccination. But she was paralysed for about two months - completely paralysed. My son was a year old- plus, so we had to get a nanny. But whenever she used to feed him, she used to read to him. And unless you read to him, he wouldn't eat. So, I had to come home from the office to feed him because I would have to read. If I read to him it was fine. I says, "Mary had a little lamb…" and he got his food; that was fine. But the- the nanny

couldn't read so she couldn't tell him any- read any… stories. So- but she was completely bound to her bed. And we had a wonderful cook. He'd looked after her… A better nurse, there didn't exist. She had to get out; he would carry her to the toilet. And this was quite a difficult- and she was left with a weakness in her left leg, but not- not too bad.

*Because of the vaccination?*

Because – because of this- because we had to stay longer. Sometimes things are- *beshert?* You know, they are preordained; it has to happen. And… the only time it troubled her, when we went skiing. She could never turn to the right or with great difficulty, 'cause she couldn't put all her weight on the left leg. To the right was fine, but so the left was always with great difficulty. So, we could still ski you know, she was fit enough, but- so those- that was a very interesting period.

[01:02:34]

When we came back, we decided with my old firm that we would try and start an operation in London, completely different from- we were basically in industrial diamonds. But industrial diamonds is a very limited field because of the industry here. And people had already their suppliers. We had some successes, or I had some successes, but it was very frustrating. Because whenever I visited a prospective customer, said, "We get our goods from a, b and c. We're quite happy with them." Although I knew they were paying too much, but it didn't- they- once you have established trust… It wasn't such an important thing for a large industrial- for Rolls Royce, for instance, whether they paid a little bit more or less for these goods. It wasn't an important item: important for the people who sold it to them, but not for- in this whole scheme of things. So, in the end I was- got very frustrated and I'd got a big contract coming and they were taken over by another company so it didn't- and then the coincidence happens. The Tanzanian government, who had been selling the output of the mine in Tanzania to De Beers, or De Beers was managing. They were also frustrated because they felt they were not getting what they were for their diamonds. And they started their own organisation. And I was approached because of my expertise, to join them. So that happened just at the right time. And my boy was then about four years old I suppose. Five years, six years - something like- he always used to ask, "Why isn't Daddy ever at home?" I was travelling all over the place and by the time I got home, he was already in bed. And- so, that's

when I joined- I joined the Tanzanian government - we had a large office here - and worked for them for- from 1966 until I retired in 2000. Also, we were valuing, marketing, sorting… this - probably at that time - the richest diamond mine that was ever discovered. We had our offices in Holborn. And so- that's the- that’s the story of my life.

[01:05:10]

*And you had another child?*

No, we had a son, just the one boy. He got married. I've got two grandchildren. And they’re- my grandson is twenty-one now. He’s going to finish his university at the end of this year.

*And do they live in London?*

Pardon?

*They live in London? Your son lives in London?*

Yes, not far in- in Harrow. So- so, that's what happens. And the children are getting older as well. Not only I. [laughs]

*And when you had your son, what sort of identity did you want to give him? Or what was important for you to…submit?*

Well, interesting- I mean, we were here. And then things of education in the first instance or at- very early on. So, I rang Haberdashers', and I rang Merchant Taylor's - who- they’re these, sort of minor public schools, I suppose - before we were going back to Africa. He was only three months old. And I phoned them and asked them, “Is it too early to register? He's only three months old. “He says, “Oh, no. That's what people do.” To make sure that in case you want a place, it's available, you know, reserve a place for whenever. So eventually, when we came back, he went to the local school, which was fine, the primary school. And then Mr. Livingston had decided he was going to move the population. He was going to bring children from Harlesden to Harrow, and take children from Harrow to Harlesden, that the populations would get mixed up. So, we said, “Over our dead body. If it comes- happens- I don't want my

child to go to school in Harlesden." So, then we… called Merchant Taylor, but they had school on a Saturday. We didn't like the idea. And he went to Haberdasher's. He was - how old? Eight, eight or nine. And he joined the prep school. And at eleven, he got a scholarship to- so he, he paid for himself. And he was in Haberdashers' which is a good school. He had a-

[01:07:42]

Then he went to university afterwards. And he studied- he studied music. In the meantime, he had a year in Israel, went to an *ulpan* and he learned *Ivrit*. Then he came back and he's been- he was- he did very well. At one stage he was in charge of the Bournemouth Sinfonietta. The smaller orchestra is the- there are two symphony orchestras in- in- there were, in Bournemouth, the large one and the smaller one. The smaller one had about sixty players; it wasn't that small. So, it was an important orchestra. But they were dependent on government subsidy. And at one stage the Labour government at the time decided they were going to withdraw the subsidy. So, the smaller orchestra had to go. And he had to make everybody redundant and then close the door - look for another job. Then he worked in Birmingham for this, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. But classical music is not - appreciated is not the word, it's not - profitable in this country. They need subsidies. So, the people in charge are looking for money rather than anything else. To get enough money to- because the seats don't cover the cost of running an orchestra. And eventually became a teacher. he retrained as a teacher and was teaching music in and- so, he's now more or less retired, but- So...

[01:09:26]

*And did you talk about the past to your son? Did you talk about-?*

Not really. Well, he's aware of course. He- yes, we did talk about it. But my wife never talked about it. She wouldn't. Very rarely she'd talk to anybody else about it. I know probably more than anybody else did. And I wrote her story for the grandchildren, basically. And when my granddaughter – she went to JFS [Jewish Free School]- she went to- once a year- when they're a certain age they take them to the camps. And she was in Auschwitz. And she took the story that I'd written, and she read part of it to her fellow classmates in Auschwitz.

Suddenly, I think it came home to her that her mother, her grandmother… had been there. Had actually…and she read part of it to the other children.

*But she couldn't talk about it, your wife? She didn't-?*

My wife, no. She wouldn't- I mean I go to the Survivors' Centre [Holocaust Survivors' Centre, Hendon]. She wouldn't even go to the Survivors' Centre. She did not want to have any contact with people who had been there. Who- for her it was a sort of "that was then and now is now." And to live in the past, it wasn't such a pleasant past. Why do you want to remind yourself of it? You get two kinds of people at the Survivors' Centre. Some who have to talk about it all the time, and others who would never even mention it. And so, everybody handles their own problem in their own way. And- and that's how she- she was a very positive, very… cheerful person. When she was in hospital, she wasn't too well, but the nurses would come to her to be told jokes. She had an incredible number of jokes. And she could tell you the same joke two days running, and each time it was funny. You know, it's not something: "Oh, I've heard it before." No, it was funny the second day and the third day. She had the gift of… telling stories. And, also to children. We once were on holiday. My boy was five years old or something like that, in Bournemouth- no, no, in- in - Torquay. And a little girl came out of one of the houses there. Same age. And she saw a little boy so they- she befriended him and they played together. And my wife sits- was sitting on the lawn with these two children, reading to them. Lots of people everywhere. Suddenly, they all came closer and listened. She had- she had this gift of telling and talking about it. That's how she taught children. She had- got children here who had, were doing German at school and just didn't understand, or the teacher was no good. Within two or three months they knew it. I says, "How can you teach a child… that the gender changes?" For instance, *Ich*- I go- *Ich gehe in die Küche*. *Ich bin in der Küche*. ["I go into the kitchen. I am in the kitchen] How can you explain the difference? That it's- one moment it's feminine then its masculine? But she could teach them. She knew and they understood.

*And did you speak German together, or-?*

No.

*Just English?*

No. Never.

[01:12:56]

Never. The only- the only times I ever spoke German was over in Germany. I could- well, I was surprised how I could still… I mean I- we left there when I was thirteen.

*And with your son?*

No. He wouldn't. He learned German at school, but he refused to hear it from us. My granddaughter was- came along when I was in Cologne… couple of years ago. And I said, "I want you to come along. I want you to see that the Marx family did not start in Draycott Avenue in Kenton. And there was something before." And she came along. And at this one meeting I was asked- I was interviewed and I had to talk about things. She'd never heard me speak German before; she couldn't believe it that I could actually speak German. But… you know, that was this Larissa. You don't know Larissa…

*You told us about her last time.*

Yes, I mean she- she wrote this particular article, it was translated.

*But Kurt, when did you start going back to Cologne? Or when was the first time you actually went back?*

The first time I went - against our better judgement to some extent - in 1954. Because I was going to Africa. It was already arranged. And this Uncle, Benno, was living in Cologne then. His brother was living in the Luxemburger Straße, at the very far end where the… ring road is. At the very…He had- he had a- was a cattle dealer. He had- had a small farm there with animals. And we went to see them there. Just to say goodbye to him, you know. Because as I said, he's an old man. You never know what happens. In fact, I didn't see him again. It's the last time. But we were there for two days. We had to leave. My wife couldn't hear the language. When you heard- when she heard German, her- she…it affected her. I said, "Look, we don't have to stay here. I came to say goodbye to him." And we went - away.

[01:15:00]

*And for you what was it like to be there in Cologne?*

Well, I'm phlegmatic to some extent; I- it didn't bother me one way or the other. But for her- well, my uncle- in- he had this- he had the animals in the, in the… … in the fields and what have you. And he had two guard- guard dogs as well. One was a big Alsatian. The other one was an even bigger Saint Bernard. When these- when the Saint Bernard sat, his head was up there. And she was very nervous. She'd had experiences with these…kind of dogs. And she was very much afraid. So, the uncle said, "Don't worry." As he heard us come, they were barking, jumping against the door. He opened the door and he said, "Friends", and they came and wagged their tails. They were very well trained. So, we stayed there overnight. In the morning, they came up to our bedroom to- to say good morning to us, you know, wagging their tail and- So…

*So, that was the first time you went back.*

It was the first time.

*And then when did you start going back?*

Well, then we went- we were in Africa. We were away for many years. And- and I don't know when we… I think the first time I went back in fact, when I met this gentleman who was going to organise our trip- my trip to Maly Trostenets. So, it's many years later. Twenty, thirty years later. No- the first time we went to- to the Klibansky…

*To the Corbach…*

To the Corbach when-

*To the exhibition?*

Not the exhibition. When they were going- building the fountain in front of the- where the school used to be, you know, this fountain with the lion. Have you seen that?

*No.*

It's a- in the old- in our- in the school, where the playground used to be, there is a fountain there now, which has sort of eight sides to it. On each side is a plaque with the names of the children that didn't survive. And on top of it is a lion which was produced by one of the ex-pupils who was in America.

[01:17:19]

*And when was that put up in Cologne?*

I don't know. …Twenty years ago, maybe. But that was at that- you know, this all- the date when-

*Yes, so the exhibition was in 2001.*

That's right; must have been around then.

*At the same time.*

Yes. Must have been at that time.

*And it was partly because the Corbachs raised this profile of-*

Yes.

*Of the Jawne school.*

That's right. Corbachs were instrumental in all this stuff. She was not very popular in Cologne, because she made them put our plaques where there hadn't been any. Outside the old opera house, for instance. The opera house was built on the site of the old synagogue.

And on the site… was a small plaque: "This was the site of the Glockengasse Synagoge which was burnt- burnt down or was destroyed in 19…" Whenever. Didn't say anything else. No 'Why?', 'What?' Didn't- wasn't destroyed during Kristallnacht; they didn't mention it. And they made them change all these things. They- outside the *Messe* there is on one of these, there's a memorial which tells you what it's all about. But it was deliberately put on the wrong side that you didn't see it. They forced them to put it on the other side where people, when they walk along, they can see the- this great big bronze plaque which says what it was all about. Whether people look at it or not, I don't know. But the point was, before, it was hidden - deliberately hidden. So-

*So, they made a big difference?*

They- they made a big difference. They-

*Irene Corbach…*

Irene…

*And Dieter Corbach. Yes.*

Correct. Yes.

*And she carried on the work once he had died.*

That's right. He died- he died quite…they were both quite young. She- when she died, she was  She was a lovely lady. [going for the photo] I'll show you- Oh, no, mustn't…

*Not yet. And she used to come to visit you...*

She came to England.

*…here in London?*

She went to England. She went- she was the first one who went to Maly Trostenets to arrange for that first- it's like a small gravestone. But it's all in Russian, so you can't even read it. But… she forced them to put that there as a memorial to what had happened. It hadn't even existed up to then. She went to America, she went to Israel. She knew more about the Jews in Cologne than anybody else.

*And now you have this connection to this, this young woman, Larissa?*

Yes. Larissa. She- I mean she read this…Did I show you the article in the magazine?

*Yeah.*

[01:19:59]

That Dirk- whatever his name is - wrote? She read it. And she connected it with me. And she got hold of Jewish Care here in London to find me. Because outside her house are two Stolpersteine.

*And what does it say on those Stolpersteine?*

That the people who lived in, in the flat that they live in- they- the name and the two children and what happened to them. They were also sent to Maly Trostenets on that same transport as my parents. That's how she connected it.

*And very close to where you grew up?*

Yes. Around the corner. Within five minutes of where I used to live, that's where they live now. I mean it's- it's, it's weird the somebody. My uncle lived around the corner, and they went- she looked it up in the local directory where he had lived. And she sent me a photograph of the house that they used to live in. I'll show it to you if you want to see it.

*And how do you feel about- that you are in touch now? I mean, it is a sort of personal-*

No, it is- it is- I would never have believed… under any circumstances that I would ever have a German friend. And they are friends. They've been here. I- they were here a few weeks ago; I took them to various places. …I still can't believe it, because for me, I- I don't need it. I didn't- I wasn't looking for it. I didn't want it. But again, with this other one who was here – Wolfgang- Wolfgang Schreier - who lives in- in a little village in the Eifel. I mean, he was the first one, you know, and he produced my family tree for me.

*Right…*

You know, I showed you that…long tree. He- I gave him the details and that's what he- he did for me. And, yes, we are in touch. I introduced the two people to each other, but somehow that didn't work. [laughs]

*So that's interesting. You don't- you didn't think you would have any German friends?*

[01:22:12]

No. Definitely. I have no reason to have German- but the first time I was in Maly Trostenets, in- in Minsk, the IBB [*Internationale Bildungs- und Begegnunswerk*] the… organisation in Dortmund, I was very reluctant. They were all- they're all German. Yes, they're all German. They're all nice people. One of them was the ex-Mayor of Bremen. Don't know whether I told you that.

*No…*

Bremen. He's a tall man. He's written- he is the ex- I mean, he was. He's retired now. He's not such a young man anymore. And I had a school friend who came to England. He was a year older. Came to England, went to America… was in the American Army during the war. Went to Europe with the American Army and he became the Town Mayor of Bremen at that time. When the Americans took over, they always appointed a senior officer to be in charge of the city… for the reorganisations. He's died in the meantime. And Fritz Bauchwitz was the name. He married- his second, I think he got married again to a German lady in- in, in Bremen. And when I told the Mayor that I knew Fritz Bauchwitz, did he know him, he says, "It's my good friend!" And he says, "He's still alive." Fritz has died in the meantime, but his

son is also a good friend of this man that I met in Minsk, who was one of the people that I was- in the mornings he used to come down at breakfast time. We used to have breakfast together. But- so there were quite a number of people there whom I met. But there are a certain type of person; they are people who are decent, good people. And they were having relationships with Belarus. Cause Belarus suffered greatly. Many people were destroyed; villages were razed to the ground. You know, it's- at- they suffered greatly during the war. So, these people are decent people who… are involved with this and raised a lot of money.

*And Kurt, when you go to Cologne, do you- do you feel a sense of nostalgia at all or do you…? Is-?*

[01:24:19]

Not really, no. I- the only thing I was looking for were *Reibekuchen [potatoe pancakes]* and I couldn't find any. Eventually, I found- I asked- we were in this little hotel in the- near the Alter Markt, you know, in the old part. And the doorman, or concierge or whatever there was, I said, "I want some *Reibekuchen*." He looked at me, he never heard of it. I don't know whether he'd come from- came from- whether he was Hungarian or wherever he came from. He wasn't a local, he'd never heard of it. So, he asked somebody. They looked… They said, "Oh, yes, there is still one place in- in the… Alter Markt where you can still buy them." At one time, you could buy on every street corner for, for, for- five- *fünf Pfennig* you know, you could buy a *Reibekuchen*. So, yes, you can get kebab and you get a hot dog and you can get all- all that sort of stuff. But the traditional, old, cheap foods doesn't exist anymore.

*Yeah… And was that Kölsch to you?*

Pardon?

*Reibekuchen: You know there is a- they call it something else in Kölsch [the dialect spoken in Cologne].*

What?

*Rievkooche.*

*Rievkooche*. Oh yeah, oh yes.

*Yes.*

Yes, I mean, I had one friend who, who was one of the boys at school, but he still spoke *Kölsch* and he went to America. And he was involved with the *Aufbau* [publication]. Have you ever heard- seen the *Aufbau*? Well, *Aufbau* was also supported by Lufthansa. And the reason apparently was, that the *Aufbau* was still real German. Because the people who were running it had come from Germany before the war. And their German was still as it had been then. Today, there's a lot of English in it, things have changed. And they supported it because it was still an authentic newspaper, which still had German as it was spoken originally, before it was mixed… all sort of- because the computer- before the computer age where English became- like that word I was telling you – 'interview'. I was trying to tell the children about 'interview' but I didn't know the German word for 'interview'. There isn't one. Interview is interview, you know. So, it's interesting how language has changed. But he still spoke *Kölsch.* Whenever he spoke- I met him a few times in New York and…I had to laugh, because he spoke the language as he had spoken it before the war. And he- it wasn't an educated- not through the education. He- he spoke the slang - not the slang - the dialect of what my uncle would speak- would have spoken.

*Did he speak Kölsch?*

My- this aunt who was here in London, she came from, from, from, from Weilerswist. My wife couldn't understand her! So, she used to say, "*Ah, jetzt muss ich schön sprechen*." [Now I have to speak nicely] She used to say to her. So, she obvious- but naturally, she spoke her dialect.

*Give us some examples.*

[01:27:54]

For instance, if you said, "What do you say?" *–"Wat sähs de?" Nicht,* "*Was sagen Sie oder was sagst Du*? *Wat sähs de?…*"And my wife said… But when she learnt Flemish, she

understood every word she said. It's interesting how the language, the further west you went, how it changed - how the dialect changed. And Flemish and *Plattdeutsch [Low German]* is very much alike.

*And what about you? Did you speak Kölsch?*

You could always hear that I came from there, but… my wife came- my mother came from Gelsenkirchen. So, they speak a slightly different language. So, it's more educated, not educated- it's- it’s not a… They have a different dialect. It's nothing to do with education; it’s to do with the dialect. So, I- I wasn't, I wasn't allowed to- or, I was allowed- if I came home with Yiddish words, that was taboo. And if I spoke *Kölsch*, that was not- I was corrected. Yes.

*The aim was high German.*

Yes.

*And in school? In the school?*

In school we spoke- I think the language was fairly, yes, also high German as you say. Likely, as you say. No, it was- Jawne was a Classical- had been, originally had been a classical school. They spoke- they learned Greek and *Latein*. And, and, and those were the two. Latin was the first language. Then I think they learned Greek, apart from Hebrew. And then there's- learned the modern languages, you know, French and Spanish and English. Those were added afterwards. So…

*But did you obviously speak also some Kölsch? What about- another thing we actually didn't discuss was Carnival…*

Carnival.

*What, or- what-?*

Well, you saw the photograph of when we were little, we used to- would, I mean, don't forget, I left when I was thirteen. So yes, I was dressed up as a…a cowboy, Mexican or whatever they like to call it. And as I said, there's this one boy there, who he was a year or two older. He- we were- we were friends at that time when we were that age. And then a year or so later, he was wearing his Hitler Youth uniform and wouldn't have anything more to do with me.

*But it was a big deal, Carnival, in Cologne?*

[01:30:15]

Yes, oh yes, it was a... I mean- yes, we used to go into town. We used to have our… our guns, and we used to shoot. And what have you. Well, with these- with these corks, you know, wasn't dangerous, but it was- you could hurt somebody with it, I suppose. No, that was a- as you say, it was a big… It still is! Nowadays they… Although, if you don’t come from there, the… Larissa, the Schmidts, they don't come from Cologne, she comes from somewhere else. And there, they don't know it. So, in fact, they go away for it. They don't like it. You know, it's not part of their…

*Yeah…*

…life. Now, my uncle's butcher shop, he, he used- somebody else used to sell *Reibekuchen* – *Rievkooche* and he used to have- always have a stand outside the shop during that time. They were selling hot sau- sausage, mustard and a- a roll. That was also part of the celebration. People would eat.

*Participated- they participated and it was good for business.*

That’s right, there was a whole- that was part of the- that was part of the food that was consumed. People would- like fish and chips is bought here, so they used to buy hot sausage with a roll and mustard and…somebody else had *Reibekuchen*. I liked *Reibekuchen* …and it was very little money, you know.

*Kurt, how would you define yourself today, in terms of your identity?*

What am I? I'm British. I'm not English, I'm British. Nobody would ever suggest I was English. No Englishman would, anyway. But I'm- one, one loses one's identity. I'm not one thing, I'm not the other, really. I'm pleased- of course, I'm pleased that I came here. That I was allowed to come here. That I was sent here.

[01:32:30]

I feel… free and independent. For instance, when I was in Belarus, people are very careful what they say, you know, it's a communist country. I would never- I wouldn't even- I wouldn't- at that time when I was there, I wouldn't even think about- I would say what I wanted to say, whether they like it or not. You know, that is- if you've grown up with that. We have- we are not afraid. Strangely enough, I wasn't afraid in Germany - at that time. I also- we also lived a free life, really. The parents had their problems, but a child… I was a free, a free, independent spirit. And I mean, I remember when I was a little boy, there was the Siebengebirgsallee - you remember? – near- and I remember- I still remember it. I was running along one way and the other boy came the other way. He was wearing a Hitler Youth uniform and he started to fight me. Well, we had a fight. And then we decided there was no profit in it. We both went our own way. But I was- I wouldn't run away from him, you know, because I was Jewish or that felt I was afraid of him. It- it wasn't like that. But…

*So, in terms of your identity?*

I'm Jewish. And I- I will tell anybody who wants to know. I have no problems in that direction. I wouldn't hide it. …No, I'm…Yes, when- when I'm, when I'm abroad, I'm an Englishman. You know. Also, in one's attitude, I suppose. For instance, the idea that you wouldn't push your way to get onto the tram. You take your- you would take your turn. I had a- my- one of my one of my bosses in fact at the time, a Dutchman was here- he was in Hatton Garden. And I was going to take him to the airport. And we got to Marble- Marble Arch and there was a lot of traffic there. And he got upset, "We will never get there!" I says, "Don't worry." We will go, you know, one after the other people give way, you know. You don't have to force your way in. It, it- it- I mean this is the- the English way. In Israel, if you don't move straight away, they hoot you, straight away. Have their hand on the hooter before the light turns green. Just to make sure that you see it, you know. So, everybody behaves

differently. So, obviously, we, we- we… You… You accept this or you assimilate this behaviour and you become somewhat like it. But at the same, time this is interesting fact. You know, they used to talk here the English used to, about the Germans, Jews being more German than the German. They never assimilated as English Jews are here now.

[01:35:37]

So, I- I spoke to people who had- the older generation in Cologne. And I said, "How many non-Jewish friends did you have? How many non-Jewish friends used to come to you for tea? For afternoon tea?" Very rarely. Very few. Same thing here. Among the Jewish people, they tend to socialise together. So… I never realised it over there. But I know we went sometimes to the people who lived upstairs who were Jewish. But we never went to the people downstairs who weren't. You know? So, even as assimilated as they were, they were still a unit to themselves. And that's is- that's been throughout history. I read an interesting book, if you ever get a chance to see it. It is called, "*The Pity of It All*" [by Amos Elon]. Did you ever see it? Yes? You have read it. Where they talk about Moses Mendelssohn coming to Berlin, in those early days. There were two gates. One was for people, and the other gate was for animals and Jews. And that is not so long ago, 250 years ago. And it's- it's- so- you don't realise how much discrimination there has been, how recent it has been and what's happening here at the moment. We can see what's happening. There's a great… fear. But- but there is the disquiet about it… should Jeremy Corbyn become Prime Minister. Because naturally, he's not a friend. And how he will behave, or how he will be pushed and what he will do about it is questionable. So, people said it could never happen in England. I have my- I wouldn't be at all surprised.

[01:37:52]

I had a very good old school friend. He's also not alive anymore. We used to talk about anti-Semitism. He says, "Well..." and he thought about it, says, "Well what actually happened? When we were in Sunday school, we were taught that the Jews killed Christ. It means nothing at the time. But it's always at the back of your mind, somehow, so it's- it, it's buried inside you." So, there is this, there is something that… We don't- don't even know any Jews. But look what they did to, to our Jesus Christ. They murdered him, which is not true and he was Jewish anyway. So, it's, you know, it's a- but as- that doesn't really matter, but it's- that's

in the psyche of the people and… In our- in our in our diamond business in London, we had a- a Scotsman. He was one of our security people, but he had a different history. But the history doesn't matter very much. He was a Protestant. He says and when he was in, he had two prejudices: Catholics and homosexuals. He says, "If I saw a- a homosexual on Sauchiehall Street I would punch him." And he would do the same to the Pope. So, there are natural… happenings with people, completely unreasonable and illogical. But that's how they behave. And I think that's how they behave towards these relatively few Jews who are in this country now. There are two-and-a-half million Muslims and 250,000 Jews.

*But did you ever have a bad experience?*

No, not really.

[01:39:48]

*Kurt, let me ask you, how do you think did the experience of the Kindertransport affect your later life?*

It must do... I'm sure it must do. I've thought about it- I mean, since we've been talking- been talking and talking to others. Really, if one sort of tries to be rational: I was burgled from an early age, if you like. First, they stole my childhood. Then they stole my possessions. Then they murdered my parents. I mean- this must affect your whole, your whole being, your whole attitude - your whole everything. Two possibilities: Either you become a very good person, which I could understand. Or, one can also understand those that become rogues and crooks. Says, "Why should I? Look, what they've done to me. They have stolen from me. They have murdered my family. They have…" you know, it's- it's quite- it's difficult to rationalize. It does- it must do something. There is a- there is a- an effect. It affects your life. It just affects everything really. …It affects your career. We didn't get any education. It wasn't available. You had to work to earn enough to eat. What you learned was purely accidental. There were some people who are- were very clever, who somehow knew exactly- and they had the strength to pursue it. But the majority didn't have a choice. They were- they were by- accidentally put into somewhere or something and that's how it happened. So, it must- it not only affects me, it affects the next generation as well. Because my son didn't

have any grandparents. Didn't have any uncles and aunts. You know. There is- there was no family. So, it- there must be …a- I'm sure it does affect people.

[01:40:19]

But with all that, you take what there is and what has been given to you or what the- what was accidental. And you can't say, "I don't like it; I'm not going to join." You have no option. You make the best of- you play the cards that are given to you. You can't do anything else. That is- that is how the- how- how life is. And some people have been extraordinarily successful, out of all proportion. When I see some of our, our - our small group of boys that I knew personally… Rolf Schild, who supported the- this, this book- this one book, financially, he became one of the richest people in this country. My friend I used to- we used to share a room- he became the National Chairman of the Road Haulage Association. Another friend, he had a- he had a- a- an advertising business before- when we were still living in rooms he was already- had already a mansion to live in. So…And out of a relatively small number of people, a large proportion did do well without any help from anybody. It was a natural- I don't know. We were forced into it.

*Yeah…*

And that's- there is the story- when I showed these people in Germany this photograph of my grandparents and the children and their- my uncles and aunts. And he said- told them what happened to each one- he says, "That is more or less normal what happened to people. One went to Israel. One went to America. The other one went to Auschwitz. The third one went to Minsk. They all went somewhere…" he says, "And when you see these big families, you can repeat it again and again." The same- they were dispersed all over the world. Some made it, some didn't. And that's the story of our lives.

*And do you sometimes think what would have happened to you if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?*

I suppose I would have had a decent education, whatever. I was thirteen- I was too young to know what- yes, I always had an idea I wanted to be an engineer, a bridge builder. But that was probably because of my… Meccano set. But… So, one doesn't know. But I know all my

cousins, all the next generation, they were lawyers and doctors and- I mean, it is the normal progression that you find in this country as well. People get education and they become academics of some sort or another. They are not- they don't become craftsmen anymore or they didn't. It is- one sees that it repeats itself. You know. Nowadays in America, my niece was saying an M- a BA [Bachelor of Arts degree] is nothing anymore. Unless you have an MA, [Master's level degree] it's not worthwhile, you know. But they all have MAs… They all are… not craft- some- there are a few craftsmen who are- who have the genius, but very many of them become academics, because the education is available. And obviously they have the ability which is in- is there, out of all proportion, probably.

[01:45:42]

*And do you think in your case the- being part of Jawne school or being together with the others- the other children - helped you?*

Be- to be together, to have- yes, to have friends. Obviously. Some of those who were kept- who were on their own, who lived with people, who felt strangers, they- they knew something was wrong. They couldn't put their finger on it. They…never quite felt as if they belonged, but they didn't know why. And we met a lady some time ago. She was a high-powered lecturer at Oxford and she was telling us about her sort of life story. And you could hear- you could see- she was a lost soul. She did not belong where she was. She didn't know where she came from, because she was- had been too young. She was lucky. The people saw to it that she had a good education, so she went to Oxford afterwards. So, she obviously is a clever person. And eventually she discovered AJR. And somehow knew; that is really something of her own background. It's quite interesting, that.

*While you knew who you were and who your family was.*

Oh yes. We-

*And also, the school gave you quite a strong identity, in that sense.*

Well, not so much because as I said, we came- we were at school.

*Yeah.*

We- well you had to be in a Jewish school. So that was never a- a question. But then we came here; we were still very young. We were never very orthodox at home. When we came to London were in the suddenly in a very Orthodox environment.

*More than – yeah.*

More so than we ever had. So, we used to lay tefillin every morning before breakfast, which was quite alien. But after a while it becomes the norm. When we were evacuated, they wouldn't eat what we were given because it wasn't kosher. You know it had never- I never even thought about it. Suddenly to have pork sausages was a terrible thing to have to eat it. So, I used to buy beef sausages and was told, “That butcher has cheated you again.” But-

[01:48:02]

*Because that- that butcher shop of your uncle’s was- was not kosher.*

No. No.

*No.*

But they had no pig meat.

*That was- aha…*

That was- to that- they called it ”*neukoscher”*. There was no- there was no pork. There was no pig meat. It was only either beef or else veal, but so, to that extent…

*OK.*

… that's how- Well, that’s- I think the other ones as well. It- but kosher- there was only one kosher butcher that was Frohwein… And he used to import the meat from- from Holland. So,

the people who wanted kosher meat went to Frohwein, who- who imported the meet from where it was available. But there was no kosher- kosher slaughtering in Germany.

*No. And speaking of, you know, of being Jewish and the Kindertransport what do you think- I mean, there was this discussion or there is a debate whether more children should have been kept together, rather than given to non-Jewish homes. Do you have a view on this, or-?*

Well. Look at the time, they couldn't- nobody could help themselves. They had no choices. People came here. The Jewish communities did what they could. But- I have one friend. He resents not having had a good education. I said, "The people who brought you here couldn't afford to give their own children an education. What did you expect? That they should say, Oh, these children have to be sent to a good school? I can't afford to send mine, but they deserve it." Says, "They're lucky to be here!" And then you are on- you're on your own in the sense that you- we all made our way with more or less difficulties, somehow or other. Some learned something some didn't. They did try and help us to get into professions or… crafts where we learned a trade. We weren't left to our own devices, without any- without some advice. But… because I lived- the people I lived with were very simple, very kind. Very nice to me. They were- couldn't have been better. But… their children went to the- to the school- local school- to the Senior school and at fifteen, that was the end. And they started to work at something or other. So…

[01:50:32]

*You don't feel bitter about it?*

I can't- I don't… I don't blame anybody for that. I know, I know the situation. I know the people who came to Bedford to look after us, sort of. They rented the house at that time for one hundred and fifty pounds a year and they had no idea where the money was coming from. They didn't have it. They hoped that somebody would come forward from the Community. They didn't give them a hundred and fifty pounds; they might have given them twenty pounds. Another one- they just gave them some money so that they could go from day to day and pay their way. So, they didn't have money to look after us. They got donations from people, from Burtons for instance, or from Marks and Spencer. They gave them some- some seconds maybe… to give to the children. And there were some children who were

always asking. They wanted. I never asked for anything. I saved my pennies and bought my own stuff. So, everybody's made differently.

*Yeah. And you are part- quite active in the Kindertransport Association? Or you are part of it? The AJR Association…?*

Well, now I am, yes. Well, it was- it wasn't- I'm a member. In fact, the- I forget her name now. She started it all.

*Bertha Leverton.*

Bertha- Bertha Levinson [Leverton]. She got the idea. I don't know how it happened. So, we had the first Kindertransport Reunion. This was the fifth- the fiftieth anniversary I think, in Harrow somewhere. So, we were all- we all attended that. It was the first time… it really came to the fore. And I mean, even here, Kindertransport was not known. It- a few years ago, nobody'd ever heard of it.

[01:52:28]

*And now you've been to the palace.*

Yes.

*A few times.*

Yes, oh, yes, I've been to the palace, I mean, yes, we are… involved. In fact, Michael Newman phoned me this morning. There is somebody from Austria… filmmaker possibly - is trying to organize something. And in July there's going to be a meeting in Berlin where there will be… some sort of a forum, some sort of discussion with teachers and- about Kindertransport and about all these things. And he says would I be interested to go along? I said, "Well in July if I'm still alive, why not?" [laughs] And I can take somebody else along as well. So, I hope that my- maybe my granddaughter or grandson- depends on the timing of it. When they're- if they're available, they will come along… with me. They can see - or hear - something else.

*And what- do you think that was important since- I mean some time has passed since the first reunion and now the meetings?*

Well, it’s more or less finished now. There won't be any more reunions. I don't think so. There is nobody left. Look, we had the eightieth anniversary. How many can there be, who are eighty-plus, however old they were when they came here. You know. They’re in their nineties, the majority of them - except for the very young ones who don't even- know anything about it. They have no- they hardly remember where they came from, you know. So, it's- it's a- it’s a bit late, but at least now it's being told- the survivors. Did you ever have anything to do with Zigi…Schiffer? Shipper?

*Shipper?*

No. He does a lot of- he does a lot of talking. He does a lot of talking to schools and to organisations. And I was listening to the ‘*Today in Parliament’* the other day - last week - where one of the Conservatives- ex-Ministers trying to extend the right of people to recover their property. There had been a time limit on it. They're trying to remove the time limit. There shouldn't be a time limit. If it was stolen from them, they- that shouldn't be restricted to a time. If it was yours, they can't say, “Well you're too late. It's not yours anymore.” It was the family property, so- and there were several Members of Parliament- one of them got up and also talked about it. He’s very much- and he says he was terribly- very moved when he heard Zigi Shipper talk about his experiences. And another Member of Parliament got up and he also was at a function where Zigi Shipper told his story. So, people do hear, and do listen and do remember. So, it's important that it's talked about as long as people are there to talk about. What happens later on, who knows? I mean, I remember when my father talked about the First World War, which was only twenty years previous, in 1918. This was in 1938. And I wasn't particularly interested. You know. So now it's already eighty years! So, these generations- it's history! It's not recent history, it's old history! What happened eighty years ago, you know, it’s- it's not- it's that it's terrible- and as long, I think, as it's a person's- personal thing that is talked about, it's still worth something.

[01:56:21]

We had this at the synagogue my children attend. They were asked to talk about- on one of- one of the Remembrance Days – Yom HaShoah. And the Rabbi said would I talk. And my son would talk. And my granddaughter - because she'd just been in Auschwitz at that time. And I'd just come back from Minsk, so, I told my story- my experience in Minsk. My son talked about his experience in his school where he was teaching, where he taught the children about Holocaust. And my granddaughter talked about her visit to Auschwitz. And I got a feedback. Somebody said, "Do you know this is the first time that they had been to this Holocaust Remembrance Day where there was a meaning to it?" Because she knew the people who were telling the story. Otherwise, it's statistics. It's a story. You heard it before - heard enough already. But because they knew the three people and three generations of people who were talking about this- the history from then when I was a little boy to now, that my granddaughter is talking about… And suddenly it did something for them, and this is it, you see? Once these people are not there anymore, it's a, it's a- it's a story in a book. And who wants to know about-? They've got their own problems. You know, how to make their iPhone work or whatever. It's much more important than to listen to what happened 100 years ago to the people who lived there who were hard done by.

*That's the challenge of Holocaust education, isn't it?*

Yeah. That is- that is the problem. And it is like that. I know years ago you used to hear about… a million people in India, who got drowned when the river overflowed. You heard it one day… and forgotten about the next. It's, it's, it's meaningless because of the numbers - and it's not personal.

*Yes, but on the other hand, there seems to be also more interest, in some way, in the Kindertransport, for example- in recent years.*

Yes, yes, yes.

*You know… So…*

So, it's a- it's a difficult- it's a very difficult… thing to keep alive. In the last few years, it's been talked about a lot. How much longer? Well, Zigi is now almost ninety. One thing when I was in Cologne, I was asked by- by Larissa, to go to her daughter's school. It's now the-

she's twelve, thirteen years old- to go to the school to talk- to talk about my time when I was that age. And I told them about it and I mentioned Kristallnacht. The children had never heard of Kristallnacht. So, the teacher explained - was very nice- he explained to the children what it- what had happened at that time. But they were ignorant of it. And… I told them my story. A year later, they had a teacher- they were learning English and religion by the same teacher. And that teacher was talking about refugees. And this little boy put up his hand, he says, “I know a refugee.” So, the teacher said, “Yes. Tell us all about it.” He was talking about me. He was- he had remembered the story that I had told him a year earlier. So, I was in a way pleased that it <u>did</u> have an effect, because it was personal. He’d listen- he- he’d met somebody who'd been there to- it happened to that person. And that was a meaning… that obviously- and he is a naughty little boy, apparently. But he remembered what I had told him a year earlier.

[02:00:24]

*And Kurt, do you speak in schools here in England?*

I’ve- I’ve only- once or twice. That's all. I mean, I've been asked but - I don't know. I am always afraid that it's boring for children to listen to this old man talking about what used to be. I don’t- apparently it does- for some children it has a meaning. In this class- I've got seven photographs here when I talk to the- another school. And I showed my son the photograph. I can show it to you as well. And I said, “That's this class of children I was speaking to.” He says, “You wouldn't see a picture like that in this country.” I said, “Why? Are they dressed differently?” He- “No. They were all white.” Even those that are immigrants, they come from- I don't know, from Turkey, from Eastern Europe - but they're all- there are no, very few, black children there, as here. In most schools in London, you'll see a few or a lot. Or sometimes you'll see a whole school of black children with only one or two white faces in it, which you don't see over there. And in this school that this little girl goes to.

*What's the name of the school?*

I don’t know- in, in the Grün- I don't know. In Cologne it's- it's quite a well-known secondary school. But I don’t know the name of it. And there was one little black child there - lovely little kiddy. So, I …asked her where- well, she- she was born in Cologne. She was a little

child. She speaks German like all the other children. But I asked her where do the- they come from? From Cologne. Where else? You know, this was the way she- but her parents came from I think the Congo. So, I told her that I'd been in West Africa. Oh! And her eyes were so happy to hear that we had something in common. [It] was a lovely - lovely kiddy. But there's only one in a big class. Whereas here… there are lots of- there- in certain parts of London you only see Asian children. Very few whites. In Kenton, where we used to live there was a Catholic school and there were mainly black and brown. So, African and Asians- Indian of some sort. One or two white children. And usually, you could see these white children many of them had red hair. They were Irish, you know. So, you had Irish, you had West Indians and Asians- Indian- and it was a good school. So, Indians are very conscious of the quality of the school. Many of them are.

*You lived in a multicultural...*

Yeah.

*...Neighbourhood.*

[02:03:15]

So. But you could see the children never walked together, the black and the- the black would walk with a white, but never with the Indians. Again this- they sorted themselves out. If- they would walk past the house and I used to say to my wife, I says, “Look. There are the black ones and there are the brown ones. And among the blacks there’s one or two white ones.” They were the Irish kids. It was a Catholic school.

*Kurt, is there anything- we've discussed many things. Is there anything you want to add which we haven't discussed?*

…Not really, it’s… Sometimes you wonder what it's all about. I mean, I see now- I mean when I… look at myself- I've been here for eighty years. And you can’t believe that it is so long ago, that all this time has gone and we are still struggling- struggling along. And… it's coming- this anti-Semitism is coming back. That is the one thing which is- I would never ever- I would never have expected it somehow. People blame all sorts of things, but... There

are many reasons and nobody can really say why is it happening. Some say because of Israel. But that has nothing to do with it. But it's black and white again. It's the- it's- you have a, somebody was suggesting, in, in, in Israel today you have the white people. These are the Jews, the colonialists, the bad ones. And those that suffer, they're all Palestinians… Arabs.

[02:05:07]

So, it's the haves and the have-nots. And that is in general, all over the world. The blacks always suffer. The whites are the oppressors. The oppressors and the oppressed. And that causes a lot of the- things they think that is- that are happening today. So, it depends who exploits it now. So, the Labour Party tends to exploit it, because they are more oppressed than oppressors. So…

*What do you think should the government do in terms of allowing in more unaccompanied children?*

Yes. Look- they are not doing as much as they could, or as they should. Because the problem is there, it exists. But it's always the same story. We have- in England you have an underclass. Unemployed, unemployable hard done by, they see an Asian move into- have a little shop. Suddenly they prosper - and they themselves don't. So, they must be doing something that isn't right. Else they wouldn't be so prosperous. You know. So, it's always through jealousy, opportunity. You have an underclass today where even the grandfathers never worked. The parents have never worked; they're all on Social Security. The children, they see a history of non-achievement. So, there are many reasons. And nobody knows how to solve it or what to do about it. We had a lecture the other day about this anti-Semitism. This is an organisation- I forget now the name of the organization. It's a voluntary charitable organization that fights anti-Semitism. And he says it's from the top down. You get it in various areas. The Director of Public Prosecution, for instance, when they bring a case they don't want to know. Unless it is so blatant and so obvious, they will not prosecute. He said so they bring private prosecutions. And when it gets right to the very end the public prosecutor takes over and still tries to squash it. He says that is what's happening now. So that is, yes, I asked him is it anti-Semitism? He says you can't really put your finger on it. But the Law Society, where you have quite a few prominent Jewish lawyers, they give their time for free and they're fighting it. They build up cases and very often- even if sometimes the police

agrees with them, when they bring it to the Director of Public Prosecutions, he doesn't want to know. It's not nice. And there are not enough Jews anyway. And those that are here would be better if they were somewhere else. You know it is a- nobody says so but that seems to be the- an undercurrent. It’s not- yet at one time the Jews were very prominent in the Labour Party.

[02:08:27]

*Yeah. But do you think there is a lesson to be learned from the Kindertransport – politically*?

I don't know. In- in principle, one should help where one can. I think that is… But politically, at the time, well if one reads for instance what went on at the time. There was somewhere I read in this whole-

[sound break]

*Yes, I asked you, were there lessons from the Kindertransport, do you think?*

As we've seen… the- the history of England is a history of immigrants. And usually, the- those immigrants that came here were always… a good part of the immigration to this country. They brought things with them, whether they were the Huguenots or whoever came at various times. They are part of the fabric of- of Great Britain. And- but there's always that undercurrent of people who say, “We haven't got the space. We haven't got the housing; we haven't got the- the facilities or the …the wealth. We've got enough- too many people here already, so…” But yes, there is- there are always good people who feel, yes, we must help where we can. I mean, when one sees some of the hardships that they are with these youngsters. It- it shouldn't happen. It hurts to see how- the difficulties they have.

[02:10:03]

But at the same time… I- I sort of- the way we were taken in by people when we were evacuated. Well, they didn't take us in because of us; in fact, that there was a war on. There was a general feeling of, “We must pull our weight and do something.” But I admire people who take in a strange child from a questionable background. You have no idea what, where,

how. And take them into their home. And look after them and give them the opportunity. Yet, logically, one should.

*Yeah.*

You feel that, yes, it would be wonderful if one can. But it's- it's a very, very difficult problem. And some of these in that- what happened with all these children from Syria, for instance. It shouldn't- it shouldn't have happened in the first place. There are two fractions of religions who hate each other, who fight each other, who kill each other. And then the outcome is that there are thousands of unaccompanied children with nowhere to go. And some of them will be- if they're allowed to come. I didn't know- Lord Dubs has been very much involved with this. But only a very few people have come in since then. So- but talking about Kindertransport, at the time and it was talked about here. Neville Chamberlain who was the Prime Minister at the time. Somewhere within all this you can read it, where he was approached. And his, sort of his reaction was, "One really doesn't like these people. But I suppose one should help." And that was the attitude at the time. And it hadn't been for, in the main, the Jewish 'aristocracy' if you like - like the Wolfson's and the Marks- the Marks & Spencer - and whoever they were at the time, the people- the wealthy Jews who were going to- or Samuels who were- some of them were forced into it and had to join in, but they did anyway. If they hadn't supported it, it wouldn't have happened. In the event, it all was- became completely different to what was expected. Because originally, they had to guarantee that they would look after these children at a certain age. We were allowed to come here until we were sixteen. And I was reading a little book which was issued to us at the time when we came: '*How to Behave in This Country'*. I don't know whether you've ever seen it but it says that when you are here you've got to be quiet. You don't make any noise. You behave yourself- you- you're very loyal to the country until the time that you leave. They were not expected to stay even. They were expected to be here for a short period and then move on to somewhere else. Same thing happened in Germany. My wife's uncle had a big furniture factory in Detmold. And when the Polish immigration came through Germany, they knew they would always get a- I think four weeks' work in his factory. But only- then they had to move on; they couldn't stay longer. But they got a- they came from there. They could rest and earn and live. They had the respite. They could have a rest but then: "We don't want you here. Carry on. There are others waiting to come here."

[02:13:53]

And this is what happened here. When my brother-in-law and sister-in-law emigrated to America coming- were German Jews who'd lived in England - British - they were not welcome in New York. They were foreigners; they were refugees. People didn't like refugees as- in- as a generality. So, it happens in every country. The old, the new- olds don't like the new. The new are a threat to their existence – they're competition. Now my uncle came to England in 1939. If he'd come two years earlier you could have registered here as a dentist. He could have worked here. Because he didn't register here- some- one of his friends said, "Come to London. Register. Then you can- if you ever come here, you can work." But he came two years later; he hadn't registered. He couldn't work here. It's again a matter of competition. They didn't want another Cont- another Continental dentist here.

*But Kurt, you come, obviously, as the refugee. Do you still feel that you are a refugee?*

[02:15:06]

No, I don't feel like refugee. I can't say I feel English; I'm British and I'm- I'm here. We live here. I'm pleased that we are here. One can't- you know people say, "Aren't you grateful that you're here?" Look I- I can't be grateful all my life that I was allowed to come in here. But certainly it's- it was a lucky break that we did come here. You know. I mean I'm not like- if you go to- if you've ever been to America and the American- when they start: Hand on heart and sing whatever the national anthem is, *The Stars and Stripes*, you know? But they are all immigrants, more or less, over there. It's a different - slightly different - attitude. But I know when my- my cousin – she went there also before the war – same- same age: when she sings *The Stars and Stripes* she is very- very patriotic, you know, as a patriotic American. So, we- we haven't got this feeling in this country.

*No…*

So, you know it's... But- yes. Good. We- we're here and we are lucky to be here and… lucky to have made a living. Some better, some worse. But the opportunity is there. Nobody ever- that is the beauty of being in England, I think. One of the advantages. The British are very phlegmatic. They don't have these extreme feelings. They are very tolerant. It's a tolerant

society of everybody. It's not- it's not quite as it was when we first came here, but they- there was not this extreme hatred that you had with the- the fascists who were here at that time. But in general terms, that is- that is the advantage I think of the British. Just as they are willing to queue for the bus and not fight their way onto it. So, the whole attitude has always been. Yes… In- and also another thing is- maybe not so- but it was always at arm's length. You know. It was very- took a long time to become close to the people because they are insular in that sense.

*And your home? Where would you consider your home today?*

[02:17:30]

Just where I am now. That's my home. I feel- the first time I went to Israel, strangely enough, the first time, especially. We were at London airport- you see a mass of people. We arrive in Israel - mass of people. It looks the same! The same bunch of people, you know. They don’t- these- these lot didn’t look particularly English and those don’t look particularly Jewish. It is- but you- you do have a feeling there: I don't care. I'm a Jew like all the others. Whereas here, there's always- there is some sort of a- reservation there. Because used- people used to ask me- after a while, they said, “Where do you come from?” “From Bedford.” You know. You don't sound like somebody from Bedford. This was when I lived in- in Africa for many years. That accounts for it. So that was- that was the end of the story, but there was always this question mark. You know, you're not quite one of us… or you're not- you’re not a Londoner. And somehow, you know there is- but it used to worry me terribly. I don't care anymore, but-

*Did it? The accent?*

It used to. I used to. Because I- originally, I didn't have one, I only acquired it. I- my ear is not so good. So, I was in the diamond business. They spoke Yiddish, they spoke Flemish, they spoke Dutch and they spoke said bad English. So, I acquired all of it. You know. I can speak sort of Yiddish and sort of Flemish and sort of Dutch and… my English is not as good as it was when I was at school but... So it is.

*So, you sounded more English, at the beginning, before you started working?*

I- I sounded like all the other boys at school. You know. There was no- nobody would ever have thought that I wasn't one of the boys at school.

*So, you adapted yourself to your environment?*

No, things- things happen that you don't even- you don't even realize it. I only hear it when I listen to a recording. Sounds like a foreigner, you know. [laughs]

*Did you try to- to change it?*

You can't change it. You don't- you don't hear it. When I speak I don't- I don’t hear it.

[02:20:06]

*And do you think the experience of someone who came - your age, who would sound English - was very different? Who manged to not have an accent?*

I don’t know. Some do, some don't. I had various friends who- some never had an accent. One of them- it's very interesting. I mean, he never worked in a Jewish environment. He was I, in, in heavy haulage, in transport. His whole working environment was very- very English. Yet occasionally, somewhere at the back of his language you could- I could hear… wouldn't believe- I wouldn’t have- never believed it of him. No, he was- he got the OBE. He was a very important man in- in the industry. He was on government committees and all this sort of thing. But it didn't disappear… In fact, he was telling me once- they were some sort of a meeting. And Prince Philip was the guest of honour. And he was as Chairman of the Road Haulage Association was sitting next to… Philip- sitting next to the Chairman to- and Prince Philip also comes from Germany originally. He was German speaking originally, although his mother is Greek, but he wasn't a Greek, he was German. And he made some sort of comment that, “Well, our backgrounds are really the same, aren’t they?” - you know - Prince Philip to- to my friend John - for that same reason. You see there is- somewhere there is something.

*OK. So, my- my last question to you is whether- have you got any message for anyone who might watch this in the future?*

[02:22:03]

Message? Well, the message is: I, I hope people will live in peace together and they're tolerant of each other. Just because they have a different colour, or different coloured eyes or different habits, we all- if you cut us, we all bleed. And… I'm afraid that's how it is. But people will not accept that. There are always some people feel superior. But whether it is because of their education, or their colour, they feel that they are better than somebody else. So therefore, they treat people in not such a nice way. As- just as a matter of interest: My son was teaching Holocaust at school. Trying to explain to the children what things can- how things should happen. He said, "All the children with blue eyes on this wall. All the children with brown eyes on that wall." And they wondered what it was about. Blue eyes? They went here. They went there. He says, "That's what happened in Germany." Somebody says, "I don't like people with brown eyes. Get rid of them. Out! Gone! Finished!" That was enough reason. There was no- no reason. But that's how people were treated. Because of the colour of their eyes or the colour of their hair. It was completely an illogical thing to do. I mean this was- can happen in society. That's how we can treat each other. For the reasons are completely unreasonable, you know. And whether- I know when we were in Minsk and the German minister was talking at great length of the getting together of countries and peoples and what- have-you and in future we live in the Garden of Eden. I don't believe it. I was very sceptical then, I'm still sceptical. Because for some reason other people don't really want to live in peace. Somebody always feels that they are better than somebody else. So…

*Kurt, I- actually, I have one more question to you. When you go- I don't know whether you've been to the Jewish community in Cologne?*

Yes.

*How do you feel? Obviously, most Jews there are not from Cologne.*

Yeah.

*You know.*

They're not from Cologne.

*No.*

No. They're Russians.

*Yes.*

I went to the-

*What do you think about that? There is-*

Well, look, they- they settled there. …When they speak German, you know that they're not. But I went to the- the community centre, out- wherever it is. And I went to the *Kindergarten* and with the chairman- I forget his name. The man in charge of the… centre there. We were in the *Kindergarten* and we danced with the little children. He, and I and all the rest with the little ones. Very- very nice.

*In the nursery in the synagogue?*

At the nursery- not in the synagogue. At the- at the… community centre.

[02:25:01]

*Right.*

You know.

*That was- I don't know that- it's after my time. There was no community centre.*

No? It always- He's a very nice- I can't remember his name. The sec- sec- the secretary is Ute, Ute, Ute, Ute… name is gone. She is very, very – very- If you ever want a secretary, she's the ideal. She's a very efficient lady.

*So, you danced together with the children?*

We danced with the small children. And then I saw them all there. Some were Jewish - looking. And the others all looked like little Russians. Fair hair, round heads, closely cropped hair - and it was so funny. You see these little kiddies and you can- you can pick- pick them out. I mean, I know they're all from Eastern Europe. There were very few who were not. But you could pick out the difference. The parents were obviously… veered - towards the Russian or- or the other way.

*But the fact is that they're in the Jewish school.*

They're in the Jewish school. Yes. They are- they belong to the- belong to the community. I mean they ran away at the time, because they were Jewish. Or could prove that they had some Jewish blood and they managed- they got away from the east. And they're all members of the synagogue. There's one gentleman there, he's Dutch, and he comes from the Dutch West Indies - from Suriname. He was very- he saw me, when I was there, that I was- didn't belong. And he came to me and we chatted. And I've met him since. But he is a Dutchman from the Dutch West Indies.

*So, it's an interesting thing…*

Yes.

*…that it's a very different sort of Jewish community-*

Oh absolutely.

*-from when you were there.*

Oh, completely different. Because I- when- the first time I went there, I- some of the people I knew, knew the rabbi at the time. He's gone now. Gone to Israel, I think. And met him. And I told him that I was Bar Mitzvah here in 1938. And he announced it from the pulpit that there was somebody here in the commun- in the- in the synagogue was Bar Mitzvah here in 1938. People [clapping] all came to shake me by the hand!

*In Roonstraße?*

Roonstraße, yes.

*They were quite excited about you?*

[02:27:35]

Of course, I mean there is nobody there who was- is still alive. Although the community- I get the local community news. And every- every week one or two people die. And they're all Russian names. And they're all sort of approaching my age. You know, they are the- the older, oldest members of the community. They're all in their late eighties, early nineties… and... But every other day there's somebody. It's amazing how many of them are sort of, well, not amazing - how old they are.

*Maybe this interview will somehow make it to Cologne, to the synagogue.*

Yeah?

*They can have it.*

OK.

*It might be nice.*

Yes. They- they may… I don't know whether they're interested. Just- well it's, it's - it's ... I- I was also- what struck me is the security they have over there. You can't just walk in. They want to see your passport if you are from outside or identification, and then they check you out and then they allow you to go into the one room. And then the door closes and you come in. So, it is still necessary I suppose to have the security because they are also afraid - what may or may not happen. You see? So, there you say, "Have you got hope?" After eighty years they still need security. After this long time. So, nothing- I wouldn't say nothing has changed, but it's- it is still- it still exists. In America- whatever it is, you see it everywhere.

*Well, I can certainly say that when I used to go to Roonstraße Synagogue, there was always a police car on the High Holidays, always outside.*

Yes. Even now.

*And this was more than thirty years ago.*

Yes, well today- I mean and when I was there now, it just on the other side- opposite of the synagogue there's a police car. And to get in, there’s very strict security. Very. Well, better safe than sorry but ... that it should be like that.

*Yeah.*

So, who- who are the people? Well, the- the neo-Nazis, yes? It’s…

[02:30:07]

So that is in Germany. It's in Holland, it's in Belgium. It's in France. It's in Denmark. It's in Poland, in Hungary. What about Spain? In Spain. Here. To some extent, schools need protection. They've got security. You can't just walk into any of the Jewish schools without being stopped at the gate to check you out.

*Yeah.*

That’s the world we live in, I'm afraid.

*Okay, Kurt. So, anything else?*

No. Nothing else. Otherwise- otherwise we hope that they will get enough sense to realize that there isn't- the strange thing is, somebody asked me, “Do you hate these people?” I say, “A: The people who did perform all these atrocities are not alive anymore. Very- hardly anybody. There may be the odd one still. And hate: It's not something that’s good for you anyway. If you hate you feel you hate yourself. You know, it's- it eats you up. It's sad.” And

they said, “Do you think,” they ask me, “Do you think things will get better?” I suppose if we educate the young people well enough, maybe it'll get better. Because it's not a reasonable thing to be. I mean, we, we were evacuated to a small country town- they’d never seen a Jew before! Yet they could hate him. Why hate something that you don't even know any-? It's like, “I don't like coffee.” You know. “Never had a cup of coffee but I don't know- I know already I don't like it.” You know. This sort of attitude. …Difficult. Very difficult.

[02:32:06]

*OK, Kurt. Thank you very, very much…*

My pleasure.

*…for sharing your life story with us. I know we have to look now at your - many photographs.*

Oh, the photographs!

*Thank you very much.*

Yes. My pleasure.

**[End of interview Part Two]**

**[Start of photographs and documents for Parts One and Two]**

Photo 1
That was Silver Wedding of my grandparents. With all their children. Her four girls. Three sons. It must have been around 1914 or thereabouts - before the First World War. Because I see my father is on there so- he was probably… twenty-two or twenty-four - something like that. Just before the First World War.

*And where was it taken?*

It was in Cologne - in Cologne - Poll. Which was on the outskirts. It- probably in their own house or wherever the picture was taken. I don't know.

Photo 2
This is my father’s school picture. School photograph when he- in 1901. Yes, 1900, 1901, when he was at school. Yes, it's...

*Where was this?*

[02:33:38]

This was in Cologne in- in- wherever the school, in Deutz or Kalk, I don’t know. It was a- it was a secondary school. It was… Whatever it was. I don't know which. But it- you can see by the- they used to- firstly, they were all dressed in their suits. They had chains, which they wore in their waistcoat. And they all wore one of these school caps. That was the- and there were different coloured caps, so people knew which school they came from.

Photo 3
Yes that's- that's my father. Must have been in 1914 probably - possibly. When he was in the German Army.

Photo 4
That is my- my grandmother. In Poll. And my mother. And- and I'm- I'm on the way. Put it that way.

*What was the name of your grandmother?*

Johanna. Johanna… Marx. And my granddaughter is named after her. Her name is Johanna. Not Joanna - Johanna with an ‘H’. And my mother.

*When?*

1925. So sometime in May, June ‘25.

[02:35:04]

Photo 5
It was in Cologne again in, where we used to live, near there. But it's- the little one is me… with my father. Suppose, must have been 1926.

*And where are you walking? What's the name of the road?*

Sülzburgstraße.

Photo 6
Yes, that is me outside our house in- in the Petersbergstraße. I was about five, six- six years old, I think. Just before I- when I started school. Around that time.

Photo 7
This is me when I was about five or six, I suppose. With our- with the first car that I remember, anyway. It was a little- a- a small Opel.

*What year? Which year?*

Which year. …When I was… ’30, ’31.

*And this is the car you drove? Tell us, what happened with this car?*

Yes. I put it into gear. And I used the starter. You see you- you didn't need an ignition key to work the starter; it had a button on the floor of the car. I put it in gear and each time the battery turned over the engine - car moved. So, I must have driven- gone about 100 yards with it. So, it was well down the street. [laughs] I had driven it. My father was not pleased. I seem to remember that. But it- no…

Photo 8
This is my grandmother. With all- with all the grandchildren. I can see they're all on there.

*Names please? - Names?*

Name of the grandchildren? Oh, I don't know. There's Otto- Otto and Harry. And… Ruth and Hilde and Kurt. And another little Ruth. Actually, they were not all the grandchildren there. There were some- the ones that lived in Liblar [10km SW of Cologne] are not on there. But most of them are there.

*And where are you, Kurt?*

I am on the edge here, this one.

[02:37:39]

*And how many survived of- of these children?*

Of those… Actually, most of them survived. There is- this one family here- this one and this little one and that one. They had actually lived in the grandparents' house. He had continued grandfather's business. And they were sent to Lodz. And in- in Lodz ... Yes. They all sur- [I'm attached to you, aren't I? Yes, I can't show you that.] But they- from Lodz they were sent to one of the concentration camps. And I still have a postcard that their father sent from Lodz to Uncle Max in Cologne in 1941, saying they need some money. Would he send them some money? And this- on this card, he thanks him for the money he sent him. So, it was possible still, to communicate within Germany from Poland to Cologne. He was able to send him money and he received it - in 1941. They were in the ghetto in- in Lodz. It was, it's - it's unbelievable that this was still possible at that time. That he could ask for it, they could get it and he- and I've got the- the postcard from the archives in Cologne - I've got a copy of it here - where he says, "Thank you very much. Received the money."

Photo 9

Yes, we were- it was the- must have had a sports competition. In Cologne in the Hakoah. And that was not a comp- local competition. That was a competition between cities; there might have been people from Düsseldorf and wherever, there as well. Then they took a photograph. And I was with the small one. I may have been ten years old at the time. So, ten years – 1935, '36 - that's when it was taken.

*And where?*

In Deckstein in Cologne. [That’s where we-]

[02:40:15]

Photo 10
It was Carnival in Cologne. Which is- it’s usually in- when is it? Is it in November or early in February? …Of 1936, ‘37 maybe. I don’t know; I'm not quite sure. These were my local friends. They were- none of them were Jewish, but one of them - a year or so later - became a member of the Hitler Youth. Then …I didn't exist anymore.

*Which one?*

The second from the right.

Photo 11
That was- well that was in our block of flats where we lived. In- in the garden with my mother. And I must have been thirteen years old, I suppose. But shortly before I left, because what I'm wearing, I'm wearing on that photograph as well. So, it must have been fairly close- in 1938. Must have been 1938.

Photo 12
This was the- 1938, my Bar Mitzvah. That’s- my mother is in the centre. The bald-headed gentleman, that was her uncle. And next to the uncle is her sister. Then on the right of her, is her aunt her mother's- her mother's sister.

Photo 13
It was my father and… my mother's aunt. My grandmother's sister. Who also lived in Cologne; actually, they lived right around the corner, Klettenberggürtel.

*And this is your Bar Mitzvah as well?*

Yes, it was- it was- these- all these- these bad photographs were taken by those two boys who had the most expensive camera you could imagine. They all- they only had expensive things. They had a Leica. But they weren't- they weren't very good at using it, because they're all poor pictures. Out of focus or, or - wrong.

[02:42:12].

*And this is your father at a...?*

At my Bar Mitzvah. In 1938. So, there is four months before I left.

Photo 14
Well, this is my Uncle Max who had a- who was a butcher in Cologne. And that is his house. And that is the business they had. So, I don't know when it was taken. But obviously before the war. But the house is still there. There isn't a shop in it at the- anymore, at the bottom. But the house, that didn't get bombed strangely- I don't think so, anyway.

Photo 15
This is the class at school. I don't know how old I was. I'm on there. Maybe nine or ten maybe. I don't know. And with the teacher. I remember the one on the right. His name was *Doktor* Braun. Did you hear of *Doktor* Braun? *Doktor* Brown. *Doktor Philosoph* Braun. He- not only was he- was a mathematician, but he was also- he could draw of a picture on the blackboard very quickly and very beautifully. And his- he went to Israel in fact and his son was- went with him. They were in a kibbutz called Ma'ayan Tsvi. I didn't see him anymore, but I met the son.

*And which school was that?*

That was the Lützowstraße – the- the primary school, the elementary school. I'm sitting down one, two, three, four- the fifth from the right. Yeah.

Photo 16
This is- that's- I think it's me. In 1938. It was a sort of passport photo. There were certain rules about it. It couldn't be face on, it had to show one ear. See, it shows one ear. And the

way it was taken, there were- you couldn't look at it straight on. That wasn't allowed because it wouldn't show the ear. This was a matter of identification.

*Do you remember- do you remember taking this photo?*

I don't remember it - no. No. I suppose we must have gone down the road and had it done.

Photo 17
That is- it was a- that is taken still in in Cologne, in the Jawne. One of the school photos.

*Where are you?*

I don't know. He's described it there. I'm there somewhere.

[02:45:12]

Photo 18
Is this- this is the- the girls. Well, they were in a similar- they came a bit later, but they were the same age as we were. As I was. But they left Cologne six months later, maybe. Or towards the end of…July, probably. July 1939. They came to England from Cologne. They were- they were in a higher class because there was a cut-off point. She upstairs is... a couple of months older than I am. Therefore, she was in the older class.

*And this is where?*

This is in Cologne at the station. The main station.

*And who else is on the picture?*

It’s Klibansky and the rest of the girls who came with him. I only know one other one there. And this other one, was in London. Her mother and my mother used to wheel us in the Klettenbergpark together when we were in the pram. That's how long I had known her.
She went to America in the end. And she's- most of- there are very few of them still alive. One or two of them. Majority- have gone… to the other place, wherever that is.

Photo 19
Now this is a- this photograph is in- when we were in the hostel in London, in 1939. We probably went on an outing as well. May have done. I don’t know, although one of them is not wearing a jacket so maybe it was in the garden there.

*Where are you, Kurt?*

In front of the gentleman. On the left in the picture. He's- his head is above me. Yes, yes. That one here.

Photo 20
This is a group of boys in the hostel. We were on an outing. I could- I think we went to Hampton Court. It was in 1939. It was sometime in June probably - possibly June 1939. A month or two before war broke out. See you still- the boy wearing plus fours, you know. Others were wearing shorts. One or two had already long trousers. And this one here had a- a knickerbocker.

[02:47:48]

Photo 21
The hostel- the Minster Road hostel in Cricklewood. That’s the place where we were first living. There were always four or five boys in a room. A big house. I think it's still standing there.

Photo 22
This was The Centre- a, a house that the Jewish community in Cricklewood- they sent a couple who became our local guardians, I suppose. Anyway, this place we could go to and they’d rented this- it was a large house, as well. And we had our- we were dispersed now with all sorts of families all over the town. And we could go there, and we had somewhere to go to anyway as a- as a group. And yes, there's a couple from London. They had two children who were there as well, at the time. And yes, it was again a sort of place we could relate to. And… we were involved with. We had a table- played table tennis. And all the boys we used to congregate there from time to time. Not all that often because we were at school during the

week. So maybe they had something happening. But if children needed a pair of shoes, where could they go? They went to them and they saw to it that either they got the money from somebody, or somebody donated something. And that's how it- how the youngsters survived.

Photo 23
Now, the one with the Scout uniform, his mother survived the war in Cologne. She was not Jewish. And the other- I'm in the centre. And the one on my other side, was the son of this famous barrister, or lawyer, in Cologne. And he was brought to school in the Maybach with a chauffeur who wore white gloves.

*What's his name?*

Wein-Weinberg, his name was Rolf- Rolf Weinberg. This one was Walter Hausmann. He had a sister who was with her mother- with his mother rather. And they survived the war. And after the war he went back to- they were still- they were still there.

[02:50:18]

He had been extraordinarily successful here. He had an advertising business in London. We used to see each other quite often. And we always used to always get together Christmas time. And this particular time he was living in Swiss Cottage. They had converted an old house which was three or four flats into one beautiful mansion. And for some reason or other he couldn't make it because he- they got an offer of a skiing holiday in Austria. So, we were quite- all fairly young still. He and his girlfriend, or partner today, went on this flight to Austria and that plane crashed on the way. And those- in those days the planes used to follow the river into Innsbruck. And it was foggy as the plane hit the side of a mountain. And we were together and we…heard it announced on the radio that there had been a crash. But we didn't know that they were on this plane. Later on, it turned out they had been in that air crash. So, he was only in his mid-twenties. And he- that was the end of his story.

[02:52:22]

Photo 24

This one is my- when I was in Bedford in my- the- this- I was there, the local senior school, for one year. And I was in the school athletic team. And I had my school colours. Which was quite a thing. And in the centre the- was the headmaster. And we were friends all- all his life. We became very good friends. He was a- again one of the people… who felt- felt for us. You know - he understood. He'd been quite a famous athlete himself. He was the- he used to play water polo for- for England. And he was in the Olympic Games in 1936 in Germany when he swam in the British water polo team. Just to watch him swim was a pleasure. You know. He hardly moved and he was moving through the water at a tremendous rate.

Photo 25

Yes, that was- that was in my uncle's house, *Doktor*- the dentist, Bernhard Marx. They also came from Cologne of course. And he had been- he had been in- after he was released from the Kitchener camp here, he had to work on the farm, but he became quite sick there because of the… horrible- horrible conditions. So, he came to Bedford with his wife. And his job was- he was an usher in the cinema. He used to show people to their seats. But... After a while he got a- a better job. He worked for- he was a ladies' underwear manufacturer. And you see… not being able to work anywhere else. But he was a senior person. And most of the older men, capable men, were in the army. So anyway this Mr. Richtiger, who owned Peltours- I don't know whether- no you wouldn't have- Peltours was a- a travel agency mainly for Palestine. That's why it was called Peltours. And he also had this manufacturing business. And my uncle- he employed him to be the overseer, the foreman, the manager of the- the girls who worked for him. This was rather a better job for him. Anyway, he earned a living. And eventually, when war was over, he studied again and became a dentist again. He got his qualifications again.

Photo 26

This is Maccabi or Hakoah. Once a year we used to give a demonstration of gymnastics here in London in- there was a theatre in Swiss Cottage. I think that was our Hanukkah- our Hanukkah party. And the one who is doing the handstand is Adi Manheimer, who eventually bought the Cosmo, among other things.

*And you are on it? In the back?*

I'm on. I'm one of the team was on the- don't know which one.

*And where was this exactly? In a- you said in Swiss Cottage.*

In Eton Avenue there was a theatre. I forget now what it was called. But it's still there. I don't know whether it's used as a theatre.

*The Embassy.*

Embassy. You're quite right. Embassy Theatre. Quite correct. And that's where we used to perform once a year. [They all have their own agenda…]

Photo 27
This one? Well, that's- that was the 29th of August 1948. That's when we got married. That's Ingrid. And myself.

*Where were you married?*

In, in Dollis Hill, in the Gladstone Park Synagogue.

[02:56:20]

Photo 28
This is, well, it's- it's, it's our wedding. It is Dollis Hill shul- Synagogue. And that is the family. My wife's mother- mother, sister and the various members of her side of the family really. No, that's- my uncle and aunt are on there as well. The immediate family is on there. And the happy bride and groom.

Photo 29
That is- well, my son when he was two. Two-and-a-half. Something like that. Three. Probably not yet three. It was taken in London. We had some photos taken and that was one of the proofs.

*What year would that be?*

19…'62, '63. Beginning of '63 maybe.

Photo 30

Now this is in in Accra, in our office. Being visited by one of the most powerful chiefs in the country to come and to have a look at our operation. My old boss is there. But he was only there for the- just for the couple of days- the tall one with a bald head. The Africans are either interpreters or else they are our clients. Most of the businesspeople were Nigerians. Most of the diggers were Ghanaians- or locals. And there was this other gentleman there with me who was looking to see what it is I'm doing. He was only there temporarily. His son was still in the Belgian Army. And to keep the job for his son, he had come out to be- together with me, therefore. He was only there for a short couple of months or so. But we needed two of us to be there because we were very, very, very busy.

Photo 31

That's my grandson's Bar Mitzvah, when he was thirteen. With my granddaughter, my daughter-in-law and my son. And me. So that is also seven years ago that that was taken.

Photo 32

This was one of my school friends. Hans Rothschild. We were at school together before the war and we met again in Cologne. We had a photo taken in front of this... chestnut tree. In the meantime, the tree is gone, and they put in another one. I don't think he's alive anymore. I'm not sure. I used to communicate with him and the last few times I haven't had a reply. So… I may assume that he's not with us anymore. But I'm not really sure.

*And the chestnut tree was where the school was in the courtyard of the school?*

That's right. That's right. It was in front of the school.

*Of the Jawne.*

It was there at the time when we were at school. And it became sick. Some disease or other, not very- fairly recently. They've cut it down but they've put another tree in its place.

[02:59:59]

Photo 33
This one? That was after my visit to Minsk after the inauguration of the place of remembrance. Where the picture was taken with the- with one of the Mayors of Cologne. The yellow stickers- are there yellow stickers on the trees there behind?

*Yes.*

Those were put there by the Jews from Vienna when they came there. They put the names onto the trees. Yes, it was a very- I think a very important visit to Maly Trostenets. And it's still- I'm still trying to get it… more publicity. But it's very difficult.

Photo 34
I was in Minsk when the German President attended this inauguration of this new place of remembrance. And… I met him there- at this meeting where he was speaking. And we- that is he [Frank-Walter Steinmeier] and that's his wife with him. And he- yes, he's- the speech that he made, I rather liked, at the... of the happenings. And we had chat, and yes, it was interesting to meet him. He later on came to London for the laying of the wreath at the Cenotaph. That's the first time ever that a German President attended this year at the- on the Remembrance Day, you know. I think it was the 100th Remembrance Day of the First World War. Or the ending of the First World War or beginning. I'm not sure which. But anyway, he was here. So that was- because I told the people- I knew he was coming. I said, "I would like to meet him. I would like to have a photo taken with him." He says, "Don't worry about it. It will all happen." And- yes it did.

[03:02:05]

Photo 35
This year was last- last year. We were invited by Prince Charles. It was the Anniversary of Kindertransport. And Holocaust Remembrance Day. And about one hundred, seventy-five, eighty of us were invited to St. James's Palace. And we had lunch there, sort of. Yes- we had sandwiches and tea. And he is- he's- I- I am a great admirer. He's a- has a great way of communicating with people. And each table has one free seat. And he goes around and sits at

the table and shakes hands with everybody and chats to everybody. He's really very good at it. Because people say, “Well, they are trained to do it.” You know all this sort of- but although they are trained to do it, he's very good at it.

Document 1

*Yes, please Kurt, what is this?*

This is a *Führungszeichen* [certificate of good conduct]. It's, it's a, it's a ... a school… leaving document. It's just the headmaster saying I attended his school from- from a certain time, at a certain time. And- I don't know what he says but- how well I did or not it doesn't- it's just more or less… confirms that I'd been to the school, at that time.

Document 2

Well, this- this was the letter written by the headmaster to the parents of the children attending the school to allow them- to invite them to send their children to England or wherever and give permission. And… some people did. Some people didn't. They felt that they want to leave the children stay- the children should stay with them. I mean, he did all this from Kristallnacht on the 9th of November- it was November, December…We already left- we already left for England the beginning of January. How he organised that, was quite incredible.

*And you wanted to be transferred to your local kibbutz from the war work? That’s what it says here?*

Yes. Yes- yes. But that wasn't- that was in- in Newport Pagnell they had a sort of a Hakhshara spot.

*But you didn’t manage to?*

No, they- I was working for the War Agricultural Committee then.

*Yes... It's very difficult to read…*

I know.

[03:05:00]

*For filming, it's…*

No, it's not- I mean, in those…

Document 3
This is my entry permit, I suppose. When we came here that was the… permit to come to this country, which also was conditional that we came for educational purposes only. Up to the age of sixteen. That was a- so that was the restriction at that time. Because things changed completely once war broke out and all this went by the board. But certainly, we were only coming here on a temporary basis.

Document 4
Well, this is- well, it's one of the postcards that I used to get, which have a- they can- it comes sort of with a reply card attached to it. One could detach the card and… reply. The address is already on there, so it- to- to make it easy for me, who, who- who was- I was very lazy and I didn't write as often as I should have done.

*Who is the card from?*

I think that came from my parents. From Cologne… sent to London, at the time. …One could use that. It was an international, I suppose, agreement that they would accept a German-German stamp on the card which was a- [Oh yeah sure. It is all…]

Document 5
This was written by my parents. That was already- war had already been declared. And these letters were sent to this uncle in Holland, who then passed on the letters - sent them on to England. But it was- didn't last all that long because Holland war soon overrun, and I didn't get any more. Then that- soon I got the Red Cross messages.

[03:07:50]

Document 6

Well… This is the- whether it's the first time- my mother wrote to me in English. I had written to them in English presumably, because by that time I couldn't write German anymore. That went- went- disappeared very quickly. That was in 1940. …I was then living with English people. I went to an English school and the German disappeared. I could still understand it, but I- and I could read it, but I couldn't- I couldn't- somehow, the writing had gone.

*But she could manage in English?*

She wrote in English, yes. Yes, she- well, she was- obviously she'd learned it, and they had- I mean, they had prepared themselves to… leave the country. So, she was able to communicate in English.

*And Kurt, what were they telling you in their letters? What were they saying?*

Do your clothes still fit? Have you got enough to eat? Are you warm enough? Are you- have you any problems? They were concerned about my well-being. They didn't write anything of any… world shattering importance. They wanted to hear what I was doing, what- what I was getting up to. So, so she writes, "Thank the people who are looking after you." You know they were obviously… They were so much more concerned than I was.

[03:09:23]

…We went to school, we had plenty to eat. I had a bicycle which had been constructed by my landlord. He'd found bits and pieces, put them together and… Obviously, I wanted to be with them, but it was not- there was- if you ask- it's- when you see the children now at school. They go- at a certain age: "What happened today?" "Nothing." Yet every day something happens. But it's just every- every- it's- today is today. And what- then they hear from somebody else, something terrible happens. I don't know… I mean… Some- he was hit with a stick because he'd misbehaved. But for you, it's of no importance. And… No, their main concern was that- whether my clothes still fitted, I was growing. I'd taken a lot of stuff with me. They'd given me stuff that was larger so that I should grow into it. That was all… planned. But as far as I was concerned, you know, I saved my sixpences; eventually I bought myself a suit.

Document 7
This one is a- a Red Cross letter. These letters- they could write from- from Germany to England via the Red Cross. They were limited to twenty-five words, which included the address. Written in Germany, in this case. They then eventually went to- via Switzerland and came to England. But this took quite a long time. For instance, this letter was written in…in July- I think it's July 1942. And it probably didn't arrive in England until September. Well, this was the last communication I had. The day before they were deported from Cologne.

[03:12:19]

So- it was written in July. We know they lost their lives before the end of July. And I didn't get the letter until maybe September, two or three months later. But that was the way one could communicate and could reply. Same- the same way- the same method. So, it was possible to communicate. And I did get quite frequent ones. This is the only one- for some reason it's the only one I've still got. That was the last one. But this was written on the 19th of July… they were deported on the 20th - a day- the next day. So, it's still amazing that they were able to write the day before they left. And that it was… actually handled and they got it to whoever dealt with these things. Whether it was the post office or - I don't know how.

[can't increase the volume of this one…]

Document 7
Well, this one, it shows you- it's self-explanatory. We brought a Sefer Torah with us, from Cologne to present it to the Community who were going to look after us. It was quite a- quite a story. It's one of these interesting things really- it's symbolic. The wandering Jew takes his Sefer Torah with him.

*And Kurt, where is that Sefer Torah now?*

I've no idea- probably with the Community in, in, in - in Walm Lane. It was taken to the Walm Lane Synagogue. And there it was- became part of the Walm Lane Synagogue Sefer Torah.

*But that synagogue doesn't exist anymore.*

Pardon?

*The synagogue doesn't exist anymore.*

Walm Lane? Yes. Walm Lane shul still- it still exists.

*It does?*

Yes. I don't know whether it's in its form it was before, but, yes, Walm Lane Synagogue is still- is still there. They were- that was the main synagogue in Willes- in Cricklewood- in Willes- in Cricklewood at the time. I believe it's still in existence. [The Walm Lane Synagogue building was sold by 2005 and is now flats. The congregation amalgamated with-? The Sefer Torah was taken to-? Synagogue.]

*Kurt, thank you so much again for sharing photographs, documents and your story. Thank you again.*

My pleasure.

*And the last thing, we're going to film you read the telegram.*

Yes. Okay.

*Thank you.*

[03:15:25]

*Okay so this is the last telegram you received.*

Yes. Yes.

*If you read it, please. What does it say?*

This is the last Red Cross message that- that I received from my parents. And it was written on the 19th of July 1942. And it was actually the day before they were deported to- to Minsk. And he writes, "*Ihr Lieben, vor der Abreise innigste Grüße. Bleibt gesund. Gedenkt unser. Für Dich, lieber Junge, herzliche Geburtstagswünsche. Sei fleißig, mache Deiner Umgebung Freude. Vati, Mutti"[Our dear ones, before our departure we are sending our most loving regards. Stay healthy…think of us…for you, dear boy, warmest wishes for your birthday. Work hard and be a joy for the people around you. Dad, Mum*

And that was the last time I heard from them. And that was- that was written in July 1942 and probably arrived in London- I don't know- or in, in, in Bedford- in September, maybe October 1942 - two- two or three months later. In fact, we know now they were… murdered already two or three days after this letter was written. It's a sort of a- really a terrible thing to have to- to say but that is what actually happened.

*Kurt, thank you very much.*

Yes, it was- it came- it was- it came via Switzerland. There an- a date here, the 25th of August 1942. So that's a month after it was written. Went via Switzerland, came to England. Here it was passed by the censor so may have been some- end of September before I received this.

*Could you just read a little bit more of the passage you were reading before?*

Pardon?

*Innigste Grüße … bleibt gesund…gedenkt unser …für Dich lieber Junge, herzliche Geburtstagswünsche. Sei fleißig, mache Deiner Umgebung Freude. Vati, Mutti*
*Heartfelt greetings…stay healthy…think of us…for you, dear boy, warmest wishes for your birthday. Work hard and be a joy for the people around you. Dad, Mum*

**[End of Photos and documents]**
**[03:17:09]**