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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

<b>Collection title:</b>	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
<b>Ref. no:</b>	RV242

<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Komoly
<b>Forename:</b>	Tom
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	10 November 1936
<b>Interviewee POB:</b>	Budapest, Hungary

<b>Date of Interview:</b>	27 June 2019
<b>Location of Interview:</b>	Wilmslow
<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr Bea Lewkowicz
<b>Total Duration (HH:MM):</b>	5 hours



## **REFUGEE VOICES**

**Interview No.**            **RV242**  
**NAME:**                    **Tom Komoly**  
**DATE:**                    **27<sup>th</sup> June 2019**  
**LOCATION:**                **Wilmslow, Cheshire, UK**  
**INTERVIEWER:**        **Dr Bea Lewkowicz**

**[Part One]**

**[0:00:00]**

*Hello. Today is the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. We are in Wilmslow Cheshire, and we are conducting an interview with Mr Tomi Komoly and my name is Bea Lewkowicz.*

*What is your name please?*

Tomi Komoly

*And when were you born?*

In 1936, November.

*And where?*

In- in Budapest Hungary.

*Tomi thank you very much for having agreed to be interviewed for Refugee Voices. Can you tell us a little bit about your family background please?*

My family background, in kind of ordinary terms- I was born to Jewish couple in Budapest. And I was an only child, which is an interesting statement in itself, because in those days in Hungarian Jewish families that was becoming almost a, if you like, a disease. People wanted children, but by that time they could see clouds gathering on the horizon. And they knew it was irresponsible to have large families. So, I had no siblings. And I discovered many years later that virtually all of my friends and with one exception, all my cousins, were- were single children. It was a bit of a sad reflection on- on the times.

*Because they were- all- all- they were born in the 30s, or-?*

Yes, that's right.

*Yes.*

And- my father came from an interesting background. His father, my paternal grandfather David Kohn as he was then called, was one of the founder members of the Hungarian Zionist organisation. So Zionism was quite a- a strong stream in the family. And in fact, quite a few members went on Aliyah before the war. And after the war I- I had other relations who- who went.

**[0:02:38]**

*Particularly a movement? Were they active in a...?*

I'm not too sure. In those days Zionism wasn't quite as stratified as it became later- post-war. So, I wouldn't even know if- if they belonged to anything- any special branch, as it were. And- my grandfather originally set up a scrap metal business which my father inherited, and that was our main livelihood up to a point until he had to get rid of it because he wasn't allowed, as a Jew, to trade- it wasn't a big business, but nonetheless, there were constraints from about '39 onwards. And my mother came from a less Jewish oriented family although never denied their Jewishness. They were not one of the literally tens of thousands of Jewish families who actually converted to Christianity as the bad times came, but- I think they more or less, my mother's family- their, their Jewishness was reflected in having Yom Kippur and maybe Rosh Hashanah and that was about the sum total of it. And in- in- in my own family it

wasn't all that different, again. My one and only childhood memory, in terms of Jewish background, relates to going to one of my paternal uncles, one of my father's siblings, Otto Komoly, who- who was head of the Hungarian Zionist Federation that- in the 40s. And he- he had a big Seder night at home. And I remember as a small child going to that. But apart from that kind of thing, and going to a Jewish school for a short period before the war while it was still possible, the Jewishness was reflected in wanting to- or having to say prayers before going to sleep at night. And- that was about it. So that's as much as I immediately come up with your question- in response to your question.

*But you remember the prayers you said?*

I did not remember the prayers for a long time. They kind of disappeared from my life.

*And do you know how your parents met at all?*

**[0:05:42]**

No idea. No idea at all.

*But they both came from Budapest?*

Yes, yeah.

*And what about the grandparents? You said one was- [inaudible]*

Well one- one was the- the Zionist branch, and the they- the had quite a large family. My father was one of six siblings. And there were three brothers and three sisters. And the- one of them I already mentioned. The other one was, he was a, the chief engineer at the Hungarian Shell [oil company]. And the daughters- one of them I know was the one who went on Aliyah. The other one was a- a teacher. And the third one I'm not too sure. They- they each got married fairly close to the war- to the war breaking out. And my mother was one of two. She had a- a brother who again is one of the Jewish stories of those years. He wanted to study architecture but by this time the Hungarian government brought in a law which they referred to as *numerus clausus* which basically tried to restrict Jewish

participation in higher education. Initially two- two percent. And later on, that was revised to what they called *numerus nullus* -meaning nobody could study. And he went to Vienna. He actually managed to get a diploma in architecture, came back to Hungary and couldn't get a job. He was doing window dressing or something like that and much to his regret, decided to leave the country. He went to Switzerland first where we had some relations, and then started wandering, ended up in the Middle East, working as an architect for the British Army. And when the British retreated from there during the war, he went with them, ended the war in Kenya, in east Africa. He didn't realise when he was upset about his fate, how lucky he was that he actually managed to get away from there. So, that's roughly the family background.

*And you said you remember the Seder night. What- what are your first memories?*

Of?

*Of Budapest, of - the family, or what? What?*

**[0:08:32]**

I'm one of those people who has very few memories going back to the kind of pre-year six period. Some strange little things like the- where we lived in one of the suburbs, I remember I think obviously judging from the memory- my father and my mother slept in two separate rooms, or separate beds, anyway. We had one of those setups where bedrooms were at a premium. And I slept in the room where my mother was. And she- she always slept in. And during the weekend when my father didn't go to work early, he was a heavy smoker. And I- I knew I had a treat awaiting me. I- I could go and cuddle with him in bed. But he was a very heavy smoker and I knew that he- he was awake when he lit his first cigarette. So, I would be lying in wait in my cot listening to the- for- for the noise that the cigarette lighter made. And then I could jump out of bed and run to him. So, that's one concrete memory. And the other one from that period: There was a Hungarian minister, I don't know what he was minister of, but with a very fancy kind of - what- what do we call it? Nobility originate name. And a double barrel kind of thing. And I heard that my parents in conversation were criticising him. And one evening I- I started singing a- a little song calling this guy an idiot in- in the song that I invented. And my mother burst out laughing and so did my father. And so from then on every evening I put on this performance repeating the little song. And it became a family

tradition. But almost immediately they told me that this was a- a family secret. I would never, ever- I must never repeat anything like this outside of our house. And I guess it was the first piece of political education, and Jewish education I received in- in terms of how to behave and not to- not to be yourself. Because there are events and dangers outside of the house that you- you have to- have to be aware of.

*Yeah, to keep that private?*

Yeah.

*Do you remember that song you sang?*

No- well I- I remember the kind of-

*Come on, then-*

[laughing] It seems pretty- it seems pretty silly as a- I don't remember the tune exactly, but it's like:

*“Kolosváry Borcsa Mihály, Borcsa János, Borcsa Miklós, az a nagy hülye-”*

*Az a nagy hülye* meaning, “he’s an idiot”. And- and that was my- my theatre piece.

**[0:12:09]**

*And where did you live? Where- where, which part of Budapest was it?*

It was a suburb of Budapest- At that time, I think it may have been a unique- independent called Kispest. And I even remember the- the address where we lived. Tüzharcosok utca number 35. [now named Táncsics Mihály-utca] How it stuck in my mind God only knows. Probably I was told as a child that if I ever get lost, I have to remember it.

*Can you spell it for me? Cause there's no way I can- otherwise-*

No you wouldn't. T Ü (umlaut) Z H A R C O S O K - that's the name of the street.  
Tüzharcosok.

*And what was it, a two -bedroom flat or one bedroom?*

I think, from memory, it was probably the downstairs flat of a double story building, but we did have access to the garden. It certainly wasn't a house, because I never remember going upstairs.

*And where was your father's business? Was that...?*

It was also in the same district, but at a totally different address.

*Right.*

You asked me about childhood memories. Not directly my memory, but it became a family legend almost. One day I went playing - I must have been about three or so - in the garden and there was a- a shed or some such with a bituminous roofing. And it was so hot in the summer that the tar started melting - and dripped down. And I discovered this and there was this molten tar which became very attractive to me. I could make shapes out of it and all the rest of it, and of course got covered in the stuff. And when my mother came home and discovered what happened, she was horrified, she couldn't get it off me. And after consultation with my father, they decided the way to deal with it was to ring my uncle who worked for Shell. And I got transported to be chemically treated. [laughs] And then this became part- part of the family history.

*And they managed to get it off?*

I- I assume so. [both laugh] Yeah.

*So, you have happy memories of [inaudible]?*

I don't have bad memories of that time, no. No.



*And then when- when did things change?*

It's difficult to say, and...other than this warning that I mentioned to you about being different from- me being different out of the house from being with family and friends. I could not really recall anything that was significant, other than kind of - the atmosphere in the house. We might have had friends coming and visit and there was always some quiet talk which I was not supposed to listen to, and that kind of thing. But the rest is all kind of very hazy until we actually started wandering away from- from our home.

**[0:15:45]**

*Which was in 1944?*

Well, my- my father - which I don't remember as an event, but I- I know from history, family history, that he - was called up into the Hungarian Army as part of the Jews that they called up for forced labour. They- they wouldn't dare to- to give them weapons, but they were taken to the- I think to the Ukrainian front, against the Soviet Army. So he just kind of disappeared out of my life.

*In 1943?*

In '43. I think probably the winter of '43. And so I was left with my mother. And, again, because I- I researched that era quite well, I know on 21<sup>st</sup> of June '44, we were forced to leave that home. And because the government created so-called Yellow Star Houses, 2,000 of them, in the centre of Budapest, we were each allowed five square metres - living space. And we joined the- into the apartment of a- an aunt of mine and her mother, because the aunt's husband was also in the labour unit. So there were two of them and the two of us, four together. We were entitled to twenty square metres. And it was a better solution than having to move in with some strangers. So we were living in this one bedroom apartment with one bathroom and one kitchen. And so I guess the aunt and uncl- and- and her mother lived in the bedroom and I guess my mother and I in the living room.

*And what was the address?*

It was in a street called Eötvös utca. In- in the centre of Budapest. Not a particularly Jewish district, but close to.

*And do you remember leaving your- your flat?*

**[0:18:11]**

I don't remember it. It must have been quite miserable, because- having to move in to a flat already occupied, probably there was no room or no wish on our part to take any furniture or more than minimal belongings. So we just kind of got squeezed in with what existed there already.

*And what happened at that time with the grandparents? Were they still around?*

My grand- my paternal grandmother and grandfather died by then. My maternal grandparents, they actually lived as- as I learned after the war, more than me remembering it, lived very near to that spot where we ended up. In a hou- in an apart- in an apartment block which in its- which itself became one of the Yellow Star houses. My grandfather and grandmother used to run a shop, a- a what they called a colonial- colonial ware, I think was the proper description. Basically it originated from that fact that my grandmother came from a- a Viennese family called Kotanyi, who were one of the original paprika merchants, which was a big Hungarian Austrian enterprise. And she was kind of low in the family pecking order. It was the son who inherited the business. And there were, I think, three daughters who between them got bits and pieces when they got married. And her- she got set up with her husband in Budapest to- to run a- a place to sell the- the family goods. The paprika which got extended into what they called colonial ware, in other words spices and the like. But again, with the Hungarian government's anti-Jewish laws, which was part of this *numerus clausus* I already mentioned, they had to give up their shop. So they had no livelihood. And as I found out probably in the- directly in the past- post-war years, my grandfather started selling door to door, little packets of what they called "plantation tea". Whatever it was. Some kind of a third rate- tea leaves. And that, that was their livelihood. Not very good. And in this - I've gone a long way around this - the apartment which they had didn't belong to them they couldn't afford their own. It belonged to a- an elderly widow who was not very well. And she

had a spare bedroom there and they were given accommodation in this place in exchange for looking after her. So, I think that was fairly regular happening, I believe, from what I researched that something like 200,000 Hungarians- Jews, lost livelihood due- due to the *numerus clausus*.

**[0:21:50]**

*And they stayed there?*

They stayed- well, she stayed- they stayed there. My grandfather was- I think in the late winter of '44, he was arrested on the street or 'taken away' as they politely said. Probably one of the people who, if not marched to one of the deportation trains, he was marched to the river Danube, where the Hungarian fascists killed tens of thousands of people. And so my grandmother was left with this elderly lady, who- who was very ill by then. And I'm not sure whether it was before liberation or straight after, but she died. So, my grandmother was left in this apartment which eventually became our home. My mother and I moved in with her, because we couldn't regain the property where we- we lived before the war. So that's-

*So she survived, your grandmother?*

The grandmother- my grandmother. She was my only grandparent who survived.

*And what was her name?*

Kati Vámos. Vámos was her family name and Kotanyi was the born- the name she was born with.

*Right. OK. So, to come back to you, and- you moved out to the Yellow Star house. Any memories of that- in that Yellow Star house? You said you lived together with [inaudible]?*

The yellow star house I have a kind of random selection, but fairly sharp memories. I don't know which particular bits are of greatest interest.

*Go on.*

[0:23:36]

Well, my first- the first thing that comes to my mind is kind of a negative one, that I don't think- I don't think I- there were any other children in the- in the whole house. I certainly don't remember having a childhood in that sense, having any playmates. The only entertainment I can recall, is in- in one of the neighbouring flats there was a teenage girl who- probably she was also lacking companionship and she had a sort of, the Hungarian equivalent – which had already spread there - of Monopoly. And she would condescend to sit down and play with me. And that- that for me was entertainment. How I spent my days I have no idea. It must have been pretty miserable.

*What about your cousin who was there?*

No the- it was- that was my mother's cousin, so she was another - another grownup.

*Right.*

And so that is my only kind of child-related memory.

*And you said you went to a Jewish school so was that – before?*

The Jewish school was when we still lived in Kispest. It was before. Once we moved in to this place, there was no more schooling.

*So Kispest was the Jewish school. But where was the Jewish school? In Budapest?*

The Buda- I- I guess the- the Jewish school might have been where we lived. There was probably a sufficient sized Jewish population there. Whether it was attached to the synagogue or it was run independently, I have no idea.

*But you don't remember anything?*

I don't remember

*And you were very young.*

Yes, I was- we're talking five, six years old yes. Yeah.

*So you remember that feeling of no other children, and-*

**[0:25:42]**

That- that is kind of quite a strong memory. And then it kind of jumps on to- what again, deducting from historical knowledge, winter of '44, when the- the Russians had reversed the- the setbacks of- of their war. They- they were pushing the Germans back from the east. And also by then we're talking of- of post-Normandy landing, so the Allies were very much in control of- of the war situation. And they starting bombing raids over Budapest, which was one of their major targets. There were fairly large contingents of German troops there. I don't think Hungary in itself was ever a worthwhile target, but they started the bombing raids. And the division was that the Americans were bombing during the day. And the British during the night. As a kind of interesting deflection from the present day, is that I went a few months ago to see a film about RAF 617 Squadron which was Bomber- Bomber Command the Lancaster Bombers. And when I saw the film, I recognised the noise that the Lancasters were making from my memory of being bombed. We, we could tell when- when that noise was heard that would be the- the first indication that any moment now the bombs would start dropping. And the direct memory I have from that time, is that the arrangement in- in Budapest was that when the bombing raids came there were sirens installed everywhere, they would be sounded. And all of these big apartment blocks had very extensive cellars, normally used for firewood and coal and the like. And these got converted into air raid shelters. So every apartment in the house was given an allocation, which probably in the old days was their particular part of this cellar for those storage purposes. And we- we had a couple of small mattresses placed down there, and would have a couple of bottles of water and some emergency food kept all the time in case the- the house was hit during the raid and we had to survive. So when the sirens sounded we all had to troop down. Each- each of these houses had two staircases, one for the main access and the other one I think in normal times it wasn't installed so much as an emergency exit and more like a- a service access-

*Yeah.*

...to- to people that the- the population didn't want to see in the main staircase for deliveries and the like. And because we lived in- in the apartment where the door opened almost directly on to the secondary staircase, so we when we had to mar- I think we were on the first or second floor, we had to go down those stairs. And it was a pretty kind of worn out and dirty staircase. And I remember after- in- in the sixties when I went back to Hungary, I had some kind of a compulsion to go and visit that staircase and take some photographs which I still have somewhere.

**[0:30:17]**

*And this – sorry to interrupt – this is of the- of the Yellow Star house?*

It's the Yellow Star house.

*And you said the cellar?*

Yes, that's right.

*Did you find it?*

Pardon?

*You found it?*

I found it, yes. And I- I have a couple of pictures, but when I- I first went back there, many well, ten years after leaving, I certainly had the- the wish to take a photo of the- of the- the house from the outside and the entrance to the flat. But I- I stopped myself from ringing the bell and checking out what the inside was like. I didn't think it was going to be a- a major joy. So I- I abandoned that idea.

*What made you- why- why what do you think you were looking for that space or what made you look?*

Well it was such an integral part of my memory, stroke, survival story. And really that- that's where I lived for ten years after the war. Cause we never regained our original property. It's- it's part of the story. I think what, reading between the lines and- and the odd comments I picked up were from my mother, I think what must have happened after the war, she went back to the house where we used to live, looking for our property. Found next to nothing. Found a- a non-Jewish family occupying the house. And so she had nothing much to say to them. It must have been a rented property, so we had no right to the property as such. She didn't find our belongings, and she went ringing the neighbours' doorbells. And in one of the neighbour's houses must have found some furniture that she recognised. And she demanded that those are handed back, because I remember in- in- in the house where we lived for ten years later in the apartment, I remember, I think three pieces of furniture, a couple of cupboards and a- and a dining table and chairs. That is all that survived. And the rest they must have been grabbed by the neighbours and totally disappeared. I- I don't even know about our personal belongings. Because everything got kind of recreated after the war.

**[0:33:04]**

*Yeah. Just to come back to the chronology. You were in the Yellow Star house.*

Yes.

*And then what happened? Then you moved? Tell us about-*

Well, when we were still- I don't know if you- you asked me about memories in the- in the Yellow Star house. The other interesting memory I have which is to some extent significant in terms of Jewish history. What I remember- we- we had to spend sometimes considerable time in the cellar. Whether it was day or night. And the nights were the worst, because if you're woken as a, whatever I was at the time - seven year old or thereabouts, and dragged out of your bed and you're marched down this miserable staircase in the middle of winter. You try to get warm, and you're lying on a mattress not very happy for three or four hours. And then I realised that there were these huddles of grownups. And I eventually realised they were listening to something. It turned out to be either the Voice of America or- or BBC Hungarian language broadcasts. And that was our only source of true- true information,

because Hungarian propaganda kept talking about all the victories. And although going back some months from- from that date, radios have been prohibited for Jewish families. They had to be handed in. There were some severe penalties for hiding them, but obviously somebody managed to hide one. And this is- this was the source of these listening groups. And I became kind of aware of what was happening in- in the war. And also had this strange conflict going on, that from- from this news, and I- I myself heard snippets of it, and also the subsequent conversation amongst the adults. So it was obvious that the people dropping the bombs were our friends.

**[0:35:37]**

*You understood that?*

Our- our only possible source to survival. But if- If the bombs which they dropped fell too near to our house, that was the end of our survival chances. And I wasn't a child psychologist. I couldn't quite work out where the balance of- of advantage lay in the matter, should- should the British and American win or- or should they stop doing what they're doing. Yeah. But somebody may help me to resolve that- that dilemma at one point. But I remember that.

*What about food?*

Food was a- an interesting business. Again, a lot of it came to me from the odd conversation later on. And when I talk about odd conversation, let me prefix it with something. I heard from my old relatives and a bit from my mother and grandmother, quite a bit about this period in terms of food. But in terms of all the other things going on at the time, the persecution of various- of various aspects of it, was really a- a no-no subject. Not until well into my teens, or- or for that matter after leaving Hungary, did I actually manage to have conversations with grownups about what had happened. Nobody wanted to talk about it. And what happened about food, to go back to your question, is that because we lost - sorry, to start from square one. Food in Hungary was rationed by this time, much the same as it got rationed in England. So in other words we got little tickets for all the- all the essentials. So much per month. Jewish people were given special rations, which was less than everybody else was getting. And I-I actually came across some pictorial evidence. I've got a photograph of a-



“Jewish meat ticket”. That’s what- that’s what is printed on it. And this kind of restricted ration became a real problem for us, because my mother tried to provide some livelihood for us. She had learned to do bookkeeping, but that didn’t give- give her any chance at this point in time. And in order to- to earn some money, she started baking- baking cakes and biscuits and the like, and selling it to other people. But of course the raw materials for this had to come out of our rations. So we were- we had to go short on quite a- quite a lot of things. And our, well you’ll probably ask me about the later happenings. But it, it- it had an ongoing importance in our life.

**[0:39:07]**

*The lack of food?*

My- my- my mother’s food deliveries, yeah. If we can come back to that.

*OK. Alright. But just a follow-up question- so you’re saying they managed to talk about the food, not about the other things?*

Yes.

*Why do you think that was?*

Why was...

*Why they managed to talk about the food, but not the- yeah.*

Oh, why they managed to talk about the food and not the other things. I think it was a kind of neu- neutral is the wrong word. An impersonal topic. A- a topic that anybody could accept as social conversation. If you say, “All we had to eat was lentils and beans.” Pulses, that became a kind of- people could converse about it. You- you did not have to say about the kind of suffering that comes out of losing relatives or- or not having your nearest and dearest available. And- and you did not have to recreate your feelings about any of- any and all of that. And you did not have to explain it to a child - which possibly was ever more difficult.

**[0:40:34]**

*Yeah. And it also- I was going to say, Jewish or not Jewish, it applied to everyone to some extent.*

Yes. So in- to- to that extent, that is also obvious that you- you could feel more part of the community talking about lack of food, than talking about persecution.

*Yeah.*

Because persecution was something that actually separated you, post-war-

*Yeah, that's what I mean.*

...from everybody else.

*Yeah.*

In- In, in Hungary there was never any admission that they, the general population, had any role to play in the anti-Semitic activities.

*Yeah. So that must have played a part in this.*

Yeah.

*In this-*

Quite right.

*OK. So, Yellow Star house-*

Yellow Star house, yep.

*And- and then?*

And then- I think more and more as I go on in life, I want to give credit to my mother for some kind of inborn instinct or wisdom that probably women have more- more than men. She had a sense on this occasion and on- on subsequent occasions, of what dangers lay ahead, or where you should be or should not be. And whereas the average Jewish person or family by this time acquired the mentality of, 'As long as- as long as we do as we're told, we're OK.' 'Don't- don't rattle the bush', kind of thing. Don't- don't go outside of your own sphere of- of- of ability and- and power. She must have been looking to see what- what- what is to come. And realised that the Yellow Star houses were just a first step towards- I mean, people by then knew far and wide about deportations- the- the rounding up of people, putting them on trains to Auschwitz and some of the other camps. And by then there were two locations that had names. One was a railway stations called Kistarcsa. And the other one was just referred to as the *Téglagyár* which was the brick factory. And those two words entered my world. I don't know exactly at what point, but they- they achieved a kind of symbolism, which was the- the kind of penultimate danger. And I- I can't have been alone in- in that; if- if it reached me, it- it reached the thousands and tens of thousands of- of other- of others, young and old. So she was aware of that. And she thought that staying in the Yellow Star house was going to be dangerous. And she was absolutely right, of course. Absolutely right, in more than one way. I'm saying this, again, with hindsight. Because I know that either people did get taken to those trains. Or, when the Hungarian fascists, the Arrow Cross people got impatient with the speed of deportations, they started going around to these houses and would take two or three hundred Jews out of the houses, march them to the river Danube, strip them, shot them, so that they would fall in the river and they didn't even have to worry about burying people. So my- my mother had this anticipation, and through my uncle who was in this- I don't know if I mentioned that he was both the head of the Hungarian Zionist Federation and also got nominated by the International Red Cross as their representative. He had lots of connections, including to some of the neutral embassies who still had represent- who were representing their countries in Hungary throughout this period.

[0:45:52]

*Such as?*

Such as the Swedes, the Swiss in particular. They had two very well-known people, Raoul Wallenberg and Carl Lutz, who got remembered later. And to my surprise from the knowledge of history, even the Spanish were part of that. And San Salvador for some peculiar reason. So my mother contacted my uncle and asked if he would be able to give us some added security through these links. And he made some enquiries through the Swedes, and they kindly offered a place for the two of us in a small suburban property in- in a suburb called Zugló in a street called Columbus- Columbus Street. And this was a- I think it was a three- or four-bedroom villa. And they opened- they- they put up the embassy signs, the flags or whatever it was, that said this is diplomatic territory. It was one of those strange events that even in the totally warlike atmosphere, in all the confusion, the- definitely the Germans and to some extent even the Hungarians respected this diplomatic immunity. So when the Swedes said, “No Hungarian or German must enter here”, that was a guarantee respected. In fact I believe from- from historical evidence, the- the Germans had some guards in this area to stop the Hungarians from entering should they wish so. Anyway, we we got two places, which sounds like a great luxury until you- until I tell you that there were another I think thirty-five people from my mother’s history- [cough interruption] Another thirty-five people in the house. And you can imagine life around the place with one bathroom, toilet and one kitchen for that many people. And interestingly I- I- it’s not very nice to repeat the story, but this is something that really sticks in my mind. And I think it’s so characteristic of the times. I remember a- an old man going into the toilet. And you know, at my- my age I can appreciate that going to the toilet may not be for everybody a- a simple matter. And he was taking his time. And there was a group of young women outside who kept knocking on the door and shouting at him and telling him that it was unfair and he must hurry up and all the rest of it. And I- I remember being quite horrified at the- the behaviour of- of these- I mean, they were educated and well-dressed under the circumstances and all the rest of it. And how they could do this to an old man. I- I didn’t bring any social standards or anything to- to, to my reaction, but it was just a kind of inborn or inbuilt feeling that there’s- there was something horrible happening there. But, we were protected.

**[0:49:51]**

*You didn’t actually have official papers, but you ended up in that house?*

That’s right. I- I don’t believe, because I probably would have seen some leftover documents.

*Yeah. And you've never seen any-*

I've never seen anything like that. I remember- talking of official documents. I've mislaid it by now. What I did- did have, is a couple of sheets of paper that was a kind of contract going back to my father and his business where he- not being allowed to keep his business himself due to the *numerus clausus*. He notionally contracted with his foreman to hand over the business. And then a nod and a wink, and 'when- when all of this is over you hand it back to me and I'll reward you'. And these documents were listing all- all the contents, all- all the scrap metal, in great detail, what was part of the handover. So that I did have. And I guess if- if we had had a Swedish, what they called the *Schutzpass*, or- I saw a friend of mine had a letter from the- one of these, either Swiss or Swedish Embassy which just said, "This person is a Swedish citizen and his family are Swedish but we don't have a means of issuing him a passport. Please treat him as one of our people." So we didn't have anything like that.

**[0:51:32]**

*And so by the time you changed location, did you know what had- what happened to your father?*

Well- it's a little more complicated than that. What- what I did know was that my father, while we were still in the Yellow Star house, that my father was in- in that unit. I think my mother must have known which unit it was, because there was the odd postcard coming from him. And- through kindness by his commanding officer or bribery of- of a nice sort, I don't know. But he managed to get a three day pass to come and visit us. And he came home- back, not home. He had to find out first where we were, because he didn't know. And he- he came and there was all the welcomes and the joy and everything. And he managed to have a- a bath. I remember that thing and I was told to keep away from my mother and father. No doubt they wanted to get together at that time. And my aunt and great aunt were just kind of entert- keeping me away, much to my regret at the time. And eventually I managed to have a few words with him. And what happened after that- each of these Yellow Star houses had, as of past arrangements, a small apartment at the main gate for a concierge, janitor. And this man was charged by the Arrow Cross to keep an eye on the goings-on in the house. And when he saw my father turned up, he- he said to himself or to us, or whatever, that this was a

person not registered at the address. And this was illegal. He- he- he would have to get out. And of course my father didn't want to leave. And I actually believe that the- this janitor was himself Jewish. But he was so scared for his own skin, that he left the house, went around to the Arrow Cross and reported this alien. And in short- shortly after- after that, a couple of armed men turned up - and took him away. And that was literally the- the last time we saw him. So, whether he was put on one of the trains, whether they just killed him there and then or whether he was one of the ones marched to the river, I've no idea. But we certainly were- never heard of him after that.

**[0:54:52]**

*And do you remember seeing that- that- when they came to get him? You were there?*

Yeah. Yes. Yeah. What I also know is that my mother started looking for the janitor after the war, because she wanted to have him prosecuted. Whether that would have been right or wrong, who knows. I mean, in those days people did things, anything and everything to save their own skin.

*Did she find him?*

No. No. I don't know what happened. Maybe he- he himself was killed for all I know, if he was Jewish. But interesting, now that you're asking me, something occurs to me. And it's quite interesting. I told you that I give talks to schools in England about my Holocaust experiences. And one of the spin-offs of talking about my experiences is that just very occasionally, something crops up from the past. And right now as I was talking to you I remembered that one thing while we were still in the Yellow Star house that happened, is that some - I don't know if they were Catholic or one of the other Christian- I don't know what you call them, branches or streaks of Christianity. They- they had in Hungary what they call '*Reformatus*', which is some kind of Lutheran church, and they had evangelical and that sort of support. Anyway, some of the better members of the churches felt sympathetic to Jews, and notwithstanding the Germanic classification which said that as unless you had four non-Jewish grandparents, you were considered Jewish, these people believed that if you- they managed to convert us to Christianity and give us a document- 'cause in those days everybody had to carry an identity card with the religion marked on it. So they innocently believed that

converting Jews to Christianity would be a lifesaving effort. And they became missionaries in- in this sense. And my mother started talking to them about converting . And I vaguely remember the conversation. And she was tempted, because it was just one other possible avenue to- to escape. And then in the end she said, “I- I don’t think I could face my husband after the war if- if he managed to return. And tell- tell him that he came home to a Christian wife and child - son, in particular.” So she turned down the offer. And- not that it would have made any difference to her or to me ultimately and in a- in a sense.

**[0:58:20]**

*No, but it shows-*

But it shows some character on her part. And- and I’m jolly glad that she didn’t do it. So, sorry, I diverted you from the original conversation.

*No, no. But we must talk about your father and him being taken away.*

Yeah – yeah. Can we break for a second?

*Yes. [sound break]*

*Yes, so we were talking about you moving from the Yellow Star house to the Swedish protected house.*

Yes.

*So where and what part of Budapest was that, that Swedish-?*

I could obviously pinpoint it on the map. For some reason, I travelled a lot and I- I’m always aware of directions on a map, but Budapest is one place where I’m not too sure because I didn’t grow up there, knowing north, south, east and west. It’s- The easiest way to pinpoint it to a stranger would be, it’s quite near to where the big football stadium is nowadays, which obviously wasn’t there at the time. And the- this district is called Zugló.

*And do you think your mother partly moved as a consequence- what happened to your father? Was that...?*

No, I think- I think her decision to get out of the Yellow Star house was quite independent. May- may have been assisted by the fact- you know it was already a bit of a job for my father to find us in the Yellow Star house. I mean, it was not any more a question of registrations. People just didn't have any references to who you were and where you were. And she might have just thought under previous circumstances, that if- if and when my father came back, he would look for us at the last known address. But with him- my father being taken away, it kind of released her from sticking to the place.

*Right.*

And it was OK to go anywhere.

*And what happened to the other, to the cousin? Did they stay in the house?*

**[1:00:46]**

I think they stayed in the same house. Or they may have been taken to another place because I- I know that after the war they lived at a different address, still in the close neighbourhood. So I don't know what made them move from one to the other.

*But they survived?*

They survived. Not the- not the cousin's husband. He also disappeared in the forced labour unit.

*So how long did you then stay in the- in the Swedish-?*

We stayed in- in that place- I can pinpoint it exactly for you because the- the day we moved, the evening we moved was Christmas Eve. And I- I know that for a couple of reasons, apart from my mother mentioning it. Interesting bits of coincidence- one is, because even in the middle of all this running and persecution and danger and everything, my mother- my mother



was very concerned about my schooling. Education. And on the- on the occasion when we left, although we were, if you like, running - escaping, and- and obviously when- I didn't tell you how and why we left the- the protected house.

*No, please tell us.*

**[1:02:20]**

So what happened again, I will go back two steps. My mother continued with her baking. And it's another one of those stories where it takes a long time to talk about it. Not for me, but obviously for my mother. And I did not hear this story until well into the 60s. Must have been about - I don't know, possibly into the 70s when I- I heard this from her. She went delivering her produce, and she was stopped on the street by the Arrow Cross. And they started marching her to Kistarcsa, this collecting place. And there must have been a couple of hundred women. I mean, there weren't many men around by then. And there were I think four armed guards, she told me. And she knew what that destination meant. But not only was she worried for herself, but she realised she had left me behind with a bunch of forty strangers. And there was no family, no friend in that crowd. That therefore if she disappeared, I would perish. There was no- no escape for me. So very bravely she just decided to make a run for it. And I guess nineteen forty-four- she was thirty-one, thirty-two something like that. And they tried to shoot her. And fortunately, these guys who- who joined the Arrow Cross were not military men. That was possibly the first time they ever carried a gun or they may have had some minimal training. Anyway - didn't get her. And you know how it is when you're in a situation like that, you, in order to decide what to- to do, you know what's happening behind you. So she kept looking back to- before deciding which way to go or what to do next. And when she- she was telling me this story, she said, to her horror, she found that the rest of that big group of women, there was not one who would follow her example. They were all standing and waiting. There were only four guards. Half of them, another hundred, another hundred and fifty could have disappeared and run away just like she did. But there was a mentality by now- of kind of 'As long as there's life there is hope. And behave, follow the orders and you have a chance of things being OK. If- if you start running and they shoot you, that's it.' So nobody followed her. And that, I think, gave her an added impetus to reconsider our- our situation. And whether she heard by then or not of the fact that the Hungarians set up a ghetto, which was even more constraining than the Yellow Star houses-

this was just about a thing less than a square mile in the town centre, and was full of disease, and starvation and- and was quite hopeless. And she thought that one day the luck would- luck would run out for the Swedish protection, and would be- we would be put there. Having survived that miraculous escape, she started making enquiries whether she could hide some other way. And her father apparently had some- a non-Jewish friends or a family. I think their- their man was also in the army at the time, in another suburb of town. And they appeared willing to- to hide us. So going back to, you asked me how long we stayed in- in that house, and that was on the twenty- on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, when she decided we would go. And to pick up the story from that, on our way to this place she told me that we were leaving. She- we- we had to wear the famous Yellow Star as every Jew from- from about from March- the March 1944 had to wear Yellow Stars. And she took us- took- took – took the Yellow Star off our coats, and kind of coached me if anybody stops us on the way just to say we're an ordinary mother and son; we're going to celebrate Christmas with our family.

**[1:08:10]**

*So it was a- chosen that- that Christmas Eve? That it was- she thought it was easier to...?*

I don't know if- if she actually waited for the particular- maybe, maybe it was part of her wisdom that the- not many people will be looking out for Jews on Christmas Eve. They had more busy times at home. Anyway, even during that escape, she would stop- we would get on a tram and stop. She was looking for a- a bookshop to- to get some books for me. For studying. And- and she got a book on mathematics with pictures. And I vaguely have a- an image of the book in my head, which in fact in the subsequent weeks she used to- to teach me. And you can say something about Jews and education I suppose in that picture. And, anyway, she managed to get the book and she managed to get us there. And this family very kindly took us in and put us in their- in their basement, in a suburban house. It wasn't a very comfortable or friendly place. During the day we had to stay down there. In the evenings they let us come up and be in their living room for a few hours and for a meal. Otherwise, they would feed us downstairs in whatever food they've- they managed to have.

*Did they get paid or-*

No.

*...did they do that-?*

At the best of my knowledge, there was no reward. And I always want to be a little careful talking about what Hungary did to the Jews. Because clearly, you can't generalise. I wouldn't be here today to tell the story if there hadn't been people like these. And at the same time, I regret to say that they were few and far between.

*And do you remember their names, this family?*

**[1:10:20]**

No, I don't remember their name. I- I do remember- well we had some interesting stories about that. What- what I specifically remember more than just from stories, is that two or three years after '44, my mother took me to visit them. And we met- there was a mother and daughter there. And what I remember about that visit is that I, I got some homemade tomato juice that they- they prepared for us, and we had a conversation. And after that they the relationship kind of slowly petered out. I'm sure she thanked them and all. But the- the other story I remember about that is, after liberation- and there- there was very little food around, and we were as desperate as- as the Christian survivors. And this daughter there, who was probably about the same age as my mother, I- I remember her first name. She was called Puszi, which is a kind of nickname. And my mother decided that they would try to get food from the villages, which was quite a- a brave enterprise, because there was a lot of talk about the Russian troops roaming the country and treating young women in a not particularly friendly fashion, to put it mildly. And so they dressed themselves up in kind of blacks and greys and old women's clothing, long skirts and- and all. And they bought some kind of a- what originally was called a horse-drawn carriage. But they couldn't afford a horse. They- I don't know how- they probably borrowed money or went to some friends or relations of- of this family. And they got a donkey, which was called Laci, which is a Hungarian boy's name. And with this donkey, they loaded up the cart with - kind of townspeople's goods, whatever they had. It could have been clocks, or furniture, or - I don't know. Clothing, maybe. And they start- they started wandering in the villages, bartering. And they came back with quite a lot of food. And Laci became a kind of family friend for a year or so. And eventually they had to get rid of him - he got too old for any more useful work.

[1:13:18]

*So did you stay there or- in that place?*

We- we stayed for a few weeks. The enterprise came after we left.

*OK.*

Because at the time when- when we left, the country was still a mess. I mean, the rest of- we- we were liberated late January.

*So you stayed for about a month?*

The rest of- yeah, about a month. The rest of Budapest, in other words the Pest side, was taken by- it was a lot of street-to-street fighting between the Russians and the Germans. And the rest was not liberated until early February. And Hungary was cleared- only cleared of the Germans by the beginning of April. So you fit the story into that time-space.

*Yes, so you were- you were lucky, in a way.*

Yes, we were very early. Yeah. Yeah.

*And also where you were, was there also bombardment or not so- because it wasn't in the centre?*

No, we were- we were out of town. It was not a great deal of war damage. What I do remember is that the Russians who first entered there, were - what is the name for it? Basically, a, a- a guns unit.

*Artillery?*

[1:14:40]

Artillery, that's right. Thank you. And so they- they were setting up virtually in the back garden, firing at the Germans three or four kilometres away. And they- they gave us some food and the usual sort of story- little boy got a piece of chocolate, or whatever they gave me. I don't remember. But they were trying to be kind to us because the firing created a- a- pressure waves that would break the windows. So I- I was used as the kind of runner, between them and- and- and our landlady. When- before they started a round of fire- they would tell me to go and tell her to open the windows, notwithstanding it being winter, so that they wouldn't suffer any damage. And that was the kind of friendly cooperation.

*So it was close to the house?*

**[1:15:47]**

Yeah! Oh, yes. Yeah. The- the guns were parked in the garden. And, you know, I mean, the- the story developed from there. We waited for news about the rest of the town being free of Germans. And eventually my mother said, "It's time we went." And we got our very tiny belongings together. I had a little backpack and she had a small case, which is all that we brought from- I mean, you can imagine going from Kispest to the Yellow Star house. From the Yellow Star house to Columbus Utca and from there to this Christian family. And from there over- by every move you reduced what you carried as much as you could. We didn't have a great deal. What I do remember, a- a walk from there just to the Danube took us- I think it took us two days. It certainly wasn't less, because I remember having to stop overnight. And we got in to this- I don't know it was somebody's private house or a- a- another apartment block. And my mother asked if there was anywhere for us to sleep. And they pointed to this bed. I remember some duvets and very large pillows. And they said, "If you don't mind, three nights ago, there were some German soldiers in this bed. And yesterday there were some Russian soldiers. And if you don't mind picking up whatever they left behind in terms of infections or- or bedbugs or you name it, you're very welcome to it." And my mother just said- mother just shrugged her shoulders, she said, "We have to sleep somewhere." And got out a little towel and put it on top of the pillow and put it under my head. "You just sleep and we'll be alright." And eventually we- we got to the river and the- only to find that the Germans who retreated blew up all the bridges. And she was desperate for us to go looking for the family. And what's- bright and brave Hungarians did, there had been a- a kind of sporty weekend entertainment - stroke - exercise fashionable amongst the

middle classes in- in Budapest, of owning a rowing boat on the river. And they would be used for excursions and- and exercise. And one of those boats would normally take a maximum of three, maybe four people. And a few of these guys who owned one- it was middle of winter, they, the Danube usually freezes up. And when- when the frost reduces, the ice breaks up. And you have these large lumps of ice floating on the river. And these guys brought out their boats and offered a kind of ferry service. Again, bartering - for juice, or food or clothing or whatever - to take you across. And my mother managed to get two places and I forget now, probably she gave them some of her jewellery. Because we didn't have much else. And these guys put- I don't know how many of us. Certainly it was more than four. All I can remember is that the water was about that much below the rim of the- of the boat. And they were shouting at us, "You dare not move, don't rock the boat." Literally, because we'll all sink." And it was quite hard work for- for this one man rowing to get us all across. There were some other strangers. But we did- did get across, and went in search of the family. And the first person we found was my mother's mother. My grandmother.

**[1:20:43]**

*In that apartment?*

In- where they moved in- I don't know if I mentioned-

*With the lady?*

With the lady, that's right.

*Yes, you mentioned it.*

So that lady had- had died and- and my my grandmother said, "Well, you- the obvious thing is for you to move in with me." And then she started telling us as much as she knew about the family. I think the last count on- on her side- on my mother's side of the family, she could tell us about six survivors. Including her own husband and lots of other members who disappeared. The- the husband of the- of my mother's cousin with whom we stayed in the Yellow Star house, he never came back, and so on and so forth.

*So, a lot of the men- a lot of the men died?*

Yeah - yeah.

*So six survivors out of a family of how many?*

Well, I can show you a picture later of- of my mother's family, being maybe in the early 40s, together. One- one of the cousins had a- a small kind of farm in the country. And we used to go there for summer vacations. And there's a picture taken at- at that place. And there are on that picture maybe about twenty, twenty-five people. And six of those survived. So, yeah. Sad. Sad story. My mother used to take me at that time in- we're talking now about February, March, April '44, at the central synagogue in Budapest.

**[1:22:50]**

*Forty-five? [1945]*

Forty-five, yes. It- it became a kind of unscheduled, unintentional meeting place. Mostly for women, who would go there every day for- sometimes for hours, just to exchange information and stories. And on the railings and on the synagogue walls they would put up little notices about people they had - lost, so to speak.

*And was your mother still hoping that your father would come back?*

Well, she had no certainty about what happened to him. And same applied to my grandfather. And so this was a place of communication, a place of newsgathering. And people kind of traced the- the history of the previous months and almost years, from hearsay and- and whatever everybody brought to the party. And as later, a few- I have to say a few people returned from either the labour units or from the camps, they would know to come to the same place. And give whatever news they could give of either people who they knew perished for sure-

*Right.*

Or the odd situation where they said, “So and so, I saw him in a hospital a few months ago. You have a hope. If they cure him, he’ll be back.” But, without any positive news it became day by day more obvious- and I- I remember my mother saying, “If- if- if God doesn’t bring my husband back, I don’t believe in a God anymore.” And that became a kind of guiding slogan for me, unfortunately. There was a- such a major disappointment coming through her. Religion began to lose its attraction.

**[1:25:20]**

*But just before talking about the post-war period, in the war time, what for you - it sounds like your mother shielded you or managed to from some aspects of your experience-*

Yes.

*What for you was the - that’s not scariest, but in terms of your feeling, when- when was the - most dangerous time, how you experienced it?*

In ’44 or ’45. I think while we were in our original home, I felt reasonably secure. I think the air raids were probably the critical time, and I certainly- although the- the Swedish house was horrible to live in, it was- it did not figure in my mind as- as an unsafe place. It was an unpleasant place and a horror story.

*Right.*

But the- the Christmas Eve, it really got driven in to me that there was a kind of possible big trouble. That, if- if we, if we get through this evening, we might be alright, but don’t- don’t- don’t hope too much.

*And in the- in hiding, in that basement?*

After that, no. Again, being in a family surrounding, I mean it- it brought its own inconveniences. I can tell you about that, but- but that was basically a kind of settled existence.



[1:27:12]

*But did you have to be particularly silent in that basement or...?*

Oh, yes.

*Yes.*

Oh, yes. I mean, they obviously did not want to know- did not want their neighbours to know that we were there. That was an important issue. And I was trained in that aspect, instructed in that part of behaviour. And that kind of contributes to my feeling when I'm trying to- to see the- the- separate the good Hungarian from the bad Hungarian. That yes, these people who helped us, themselves thought that the people next door might not be so kind.

*Yes, so coming to the post-war thing, the one question is to ask- how you then managed to come back to normal life?*

Well, that's a bit of a long story. The first question was, immediate existence. Yes, we had a place to sleep at. Well, we had- my grandmother my mother and I had this one -bedroom apartment, quite spacious, really, for a one -bedroom apartment. But it was on the basis that in terms of sleeping accommodation, my mother and I occupied the bedroom. I remember two very funny beds there, with brass bread- bedsteads and the like. And my grandmother volunteered to sleep in the- I think eventually it became the living room, but not immediately. I'll tell you why in a second. There was also a big entrance space she might have started there. And I say that the living room was not exactly liveable in. It's almost inconceivable in today's light. There had been this street-to-street fighting in Budapest, and this particular apartment got hit by artillery fire. So, one of the windows- it, it had two windows facing the street. And one of the windows got hit. So, it was open to the elements. And we're talking still about late- late winter, early spring, which in Budapest means freezing temperatures. And so I- I- I guess it was not sleep- suitable for sleeping in. And some- the do- the window frames were- were undamaged for some interesting reason, and I think they managed to repair the bricks et cetera, but there was no glass in the windows. And some bright sparks in- in the building trade came up with the discovery, and I remember this very clearly, that if you took brown wrapping paper and soaked it in oil - whatever oil it was, I don't know - it

became translucent. So they removed the broken glass from the windows, and they managed to stick sheets of this translucent brown paper to the windows, and we ended up with this mortuary-like atmosphere but we had the wind and the cold kept out of out- out of the- the room. There was very little heating. In those days there was certainly no central heating. There was a big kind of wooden stove, but we didn't have much wood. So it was like maybe for a couple for hours in the evening we could go into the kitchen and light a fire there in the- in the kitchen stove. And that became for quite a few years that I can think back, from '45 maybe as long as '47, '48, the kitchen in this flat was the only place which ever got heated. In terms of food... pulses were the, the- the main staple diet. Somebody discovered dried eggs. I don't know where those came from. Somebody discovered dried onions. And if you fry dried onions - and maybe this is where my interest in cooking started way back- fried- dry, onions on top of lentils or split peas or something like that, that made a very delicious meal. Meat, for just about everybody, was out of the question. There were no meat supplies. Except in the first few weeks I remember people mentioning that- the Russian artillery in those days was still drawn by horses. And when those got injured in the fighting, they- they would butcher them on the street and people went and queued up with buckets to, to get a piece of horsemeat. And that became a real luxury for a lot of people. And...

[1:33:19]

*So, hardship – hardship.*

Hardship. Yes. And in the middle of the hardship you- you- you became very creative. And I think this is where- where my mother with the other woman went into the country to start looking for food. In- in the months following.

*And managed to get something.*

Yeah. To- to bring something home- home to us.

*But you said before, the food thing had had a consequence for your mother. And the impact, or-*

Well, the- no, where I- I- I mentioned- I think we already talked about that. Because the food thing in- while we were still in the protected house, that's what sent her out on the food delivery where she got caught.

*Right.*

Yep. Ok.

*So yeah, she managed to escape from that.*

Yes. Yeah.

*And what about- you said before that you were always the only child with other adults. In the post war period, was that still the same or were there other children appearing?*

Oh there were other children appearing. For- I- I guess it took some- well, the immediate aftermath of- because, I described the conditions in that apartment to you. I think that made my mother do something which kind of hit me quite hard. She found some kind of residential school, or children's home, or something like that in- in one of the suburbs. I don't know how that came about, and I guess it must have been free because she couldn't have paid for it. And she kind of apologised to me and said, "That's where you're going to live now." And all I could get from that was that I was not wanted at home. I didn't realise that she was really trying to give me a better existence than what was available in that ice cold place with daily struggles to eat and- and all the rest of it. That did not enter my world. All I knew was that I was with a bunch of strange kids, with a dormitory, I don't know twenty, thirty strong. I remember-

**[1:35:49]**

*What was it called, that school?*

I've no idea. It was some- the- I think they called it "Swiss" - something. May have been, again, kindness of one of the foreign embassies, or something like that.

*Was it like a...*

A total mystery to me.

*...orphanage or was it like a- residential...[inaudible]?*

It was a bit like an orphanage.

*...school, or...?*

There were- there was not a great deal of schooling. It was- it was more like an orphanage. The only kind of event I can remember participating in was playing outdoors for short periods of time. Because- I remember that only because on one of those occasions somebody pushed me and I- I fell on a rock or something, and I had a- quite a serious damage on my head. And I was put into the hospital unit. And I think that's when my mother eventually decided to take me away from there, because I was very miserable.

*How long- how long were you there for?*

It would have been a large number of weeks or a small number of months, something like that. But there- there was still no schooling, so in that sense it was probably a better solution, in more ways than one, than being at home. But a, a child doesn't measure things in those terms.

*No, you were not happy to be separated.*

I was not happy. No. No.

*And then you returned. Again, still no schooling, or...?*

**[1:37:15]**

I returned. Still no schooling, until- I forget the actual time it would have been. I guess- could have been the autumn of '45 or- or possibly '46. More likely '46, when I don't know about

other schools, but a- a Jewish school started up. A- a school that has been Jewish pre-war. And I think my mother's attitude was that this was a possibility both in kind of financial terms and also because my father wasn't there to bring anything Jewish into our lives, that she felt obliged to keep me inside of some kind of some kind of Jewish upbringing. And so she enrolled me in that school. And for a year and a bit, I- I went to this Jewish school. I even learned, I think, the odd prayer and- and a little bit of Hebrew writing. And I made a couple of Jewish friends at that place that I- I'm- later met up with again. But the rest- the rest of the contacts I lost. And in terms of education, what then happened is that when the Communist system kicked in, they stopped this being a Jewish school. They told everybody they had to go to their locally nominated district school. And that's- that's where I went near- near where I lived.

*Near the flat?*

Where we had- where we were in the flat with my grandmother.

*And what was that like to start at your local primary school?*

That was a- an interesting experience. And strangely enough, Jewishness kicked in to my life at that point again. Because the main thing, apart from the educational issues, I- I- I was always a - let's call it - a good pupil. I was a high achiever. So I had no problems. But in the initial year or so, in this school, the curriculum still included religious classes. Notwithstanding the- the Communist edicts. And what happened in Hungary, the vast majority of the population is Roman Catholic. So that- that notionally represented the percentage in every school. So what they said was that the weekly - whatever it was - couple of hours maybe, well, an hour twice a week, the Catholic education would be in the main classroom. And other religions would have their own stream in allocated rooms. So there you're sitting in- in a class of thirty-odd kids and the teacher says, "Now those of other religions stand up and go to their classes." So immediately, you were visible. And in broad terms, 'other religions' always meant Jewish. So everybody knew who the Jewish kids were. And the strange, and- and I had by the way a touch more education. I may even have learned I think, writing a few modern Hebrew letters, which I later totally forgot - and never practised. But instead of this giving- giving me a Jewish identity, in the positive, it gave me a Jewish identity in the negative.

[1:41:57]

*You felt singled out?*

Singled out. Definitely. And so much so - and I wasn't a- alone in that. Because a few years ago, I met up with one of my, well, two of my classmates in Canada. And I knew that those two were Jewish for various personal reasons. But we started talking about old friends at that school. And we came up with twelve or thirteen names. And as we went through them one by one, we decided that every one of them were Jewish. And we- we- we hang out together. And not once in that group did any one of us ever mention being Jewish. It was like "OK, maybe the others know who we are. We are not going to admit to it, not even to each other." And it was a very sad reflection of, I guess, two things. Both are pre-war and war experiences of what being Jewish equates to. And also the atmosphere post-war, where we didn't get too many hints of things being that much better.

*So it was something not open or talked about.*

It was- yeah. Yeah.

*And that stayed with you?*

It stayed with me. I mean, it stayed with me certainly for ten years and longer after I came to Britain. And it started becoming something different particularly when I got married to somebody Jewish in this country.

*Yeah.*

But that's- that's another story.

*What about learning about the fate of the Jews in the concentration camps and things like that? Do you remember when that was? Were you aware of what was...?*

[1:44:17]

Well, obviously I- I learned about the losses through the various people we met, friends and family - where very often you met single women, of course, or children with no fathers in- in schools and so on and so forth. But one particular thing I remember which- which struck me at the time. We had a branch of the family which lived in- in an area which were kind of- ahead in the- in the deportations. So the vast majority of- of that region got sent to Auschwitz. And miraculously, one cousin several times removed, came- came back from Auschwitz. And one Sunday, we were going to this family gathering when this person was going to be present. I hadn't met her before. And before we left home, my mo- my mother said to me, "Look, you're going to meet this woman called Hedi," and it was summer, "and you will notice she'll be in a sleeveless dress probably. And you will notice a- a strang- a number tattooed on her arm. And under no circumstances must you ask about it, or make any reference to it." And it took me a while to discover what- what that number stood for. And of course-

*And your mother didn't tell you?*

No. No. She just said this conversation was off limits. And- and- and that conversation was off limits, and not only in Hungary in those days. It- it definitely was there. When I came here, as it so happens in the refugee group, the students that I came with, there were several Jewish students and I made good friends with them. And, we never discussed it amongst ourselves. But I- I- I- I go further than that. Only two months ago, I was in Hungary. I- I go- I will have to say regularly - virtually twice a year - to Hungary because I've got four cousins there. No- no other relations- and- and their children, of course. And two of them I'm very close to, and we exchanged quite a few stories from the past. The- the other two I'm not so close to. And I always assumed that they miraculously survived the war. It- they went untouched. And everything had been fine. And normally in- in April I met each of them, each of those two, separately. And I don't know, maybe me talking about my experiences of talking about Holocaust to schools in England, they suddenly opened up. And they started telling me about their wartime experiences. One of them was only, I think, three years old. The other one is a year older than me. And it turned out that their, they had horror stories. And in twenty years of- of shared living in Hungary, and whatever, fifty-odd years of meeting them on and off once a year, twice a year, when I go visiting, they would not say a word about it. And I- I- I think it's typical of how deep these experiences and these hurts cut

people. And how- [coughs] they just want to find their own ways of coping with it. And hopefully by- by now they managed to cope.

**[1:49:04]**

*Yes.*

Yeah.

*And the trauma.*

And the trauma, yeah.

*And they probably-*

I mean, one of these two cousins, she- she told me her father disappeared in one of the labour units. Her mother got rounded up on the street and taken away on the trains. And she was literally left as a three-year-old, in the hands of strangers. And had starvation and- and a disease and God knows what. It's a miracle she did survive. But she would not talk about it. And- and she got adopted- her father actually came back from the labour unit, but her mother was lost. And that father married the cousin of mine with whom we stayed in the Yellow Star house, who- who had lost her husband, and adopted this cousin. So really she's a step-cousin of mine. And- she then married a non-Jewish person, the cousin did. And they had three- three children. And they brought up the three children Christian. And only when their youngest child through my auntie, as I call her, one day sat down to talk about the past, found out that she was Jewish, did- did that whole family discover their link to Jews and Judaism and all the rest of it. And now the- the girl who who is my cousin's daughter, she- she- she has now kind of re-converted herself to- to Judaism.

*So in a way it's not a finished story.*

It's not a finished story!. She's got now a Jewish family. She married a- She lives in this country. She married a Jewish guy and she has now got two Jewish kids - which is a miracle in itself. I mean, how lucky those kids are Jewish.



*Really interesting.*

Yeah.

**[1:51:29]**

*So to come back to the post-war and your story. So, you finished- then what happened after you finished the state school, the primary school?*

When I finished the primary school, the Hungarian education system-based on, on the Russian, brought about a set of schools which were a kind of mix of general and technical education, they called them *Technikum*. And I- I wanted to study engineering. One of the quirks of the- I suppose then a quirk of the Hungarian system which affected education, was that although they talk in - what do you call it socialism or communism? They talk about the equality of person and what matters is who you are and nothing else. They wanted to restore past injustices as they called it, whereby rich people had more rights than- than others. So they said we want to prioritise education for people who- whose father was a- a person working with their hands. So you had to have a- a factory worker or a peasant in order to get good education. If you were anyone else- if your father was a doctor or a teacher or something like this you were already second-rate. If you were- they had- they had categories. If your father was a- had- had owned a factory, or- or a farm or something like that, you were already an exploiting bourgeois. And on that scale of things, my father who had this small scrap metal business, I became a- a bourgeois offspring. So my teacher in primary school told me that I shouldn't really aspire to university, because I'll be filtered out anyway. I have a much better chance to become anything connected to engineering, which was my dream, by going to this technical high school. Which if I'm very lucky, might still just qualify me for university. So that's where I went. I went in one of the suburbs. And my teachers there, who recognised my position, because that kind of differentiation lingered on, said, "You really have to be top of the class if you want to stand a chance." And one of my- my school- my years had even tried to blur the the registration details, so that my father wouldn't look quite as bad in, in their books. It didn't quite work out. But I knew that I had to excel. And- and I did, and I managed to get a university place - ultimately.

[1:54:57]

*Despite-*

With all my black marks against my names. “Enemy of the People”, I almost was. I don’t know how I would have failed ultimately in Hungarian public life, but fortunately it never came to that.

*So you got a- a place.*

I got a place at the technical university in- in Hungary.

*And you said you knew very early you wanted to be an engineer-*

Yeah.

*...or study engineering. Why?*

Well I used to- no, funnily enough I used to say I either wanted to be an engineer- I have no reason to say- I suppose because I liked looking at steam engines and the like and they looked very impressive. Or, I wanted to be a chef. And where that entered my world I don’t know either. But retrospectively after the- after the war, that kind of got established more properly because I- I mentioned to you living in- in the kitchen as the only warm place. I used to watch my grandmother cooking and baking. And I used to help her with certain things in the kitchen and I became a- a passive expert at cooking.

*Aha. What was she cooking? What- what sort of food? What do you remember?*

Well at that time, I didn’t do anything. I- I would do things like if she wanted to make something simple like fry some onions, I would help her stir. Or- or make a roux for a- a dish.

*But what was she cooking? What was she doing?*

Oh! She was doing everything. I mean, my grandmother and- and- and my mother and I formed what today would be called a- I suppose, a- a modern nuclear family. My mother became the earner. And she went out to work six days a week. And my grandmother took on the mother's role. She was running the household, cooking and cleaning and mending and- and all the rest of it.

**[1:57:04]**

*And what job did your mother have?*

She had some training in bookkeeping, and that enabled her, I think in the first place with a Jewish organisation. Yeah. And later with a, a- a bakery outfit, to get quite a respectable job. And she wasn't a high earner, but it was enough to keep the three of us going. A few years after the war, my uncle, who had contacted us- he- he discovered that we survived and he- from time to time he sent us a little assistance.

*And where was he after the war? Where did he...?*

He was in Kenya. He- he lived there. He settled. He set up a practice and became a- quite a well-known architect there.

*And he stayed in Kenya?*

And he stayed in Kenya, yes. Yeah.

*Right. So- you were-*

Yeah, we had a- one funny story I remember from that time- my grandmother, I mentioned that she was one of three sisters. And one of those sisters ended up in the US - and later Brazil. But while she was in the US, after the war she started searching for her sister when she found us. She sent us a few... par- food parcels. And those were always very big events. They were real treats, and delicacies and what have you. But one day, a- a- a tin came out of the parcel and nobody knew what on earth it was. We opened it and there was a- a kind of fine brown powder. And nobody had any idea, and we didn't speak English and I'm not sure

if the explanation would have helped. Anyway it was lying around for ages. And one day I decided to make some kind of experiment since nobody wanted this. And I boiled some water in a pan, and put this whole tin load of brown powder in it and put a bunch of sugar. And it turned into a goo which tasted quite nice and quite a nice aroma. And we started eating it. And I'm not sure if immediately after or- or a month or years after, somebody told us that what I used- this brown powder, was Nescafe. [laughs] And I obviously invented a new product. But we enjoyed it at the time as a special treat.

[1:59:52]

*Never seen before.*

Never seen before, no.

*And at that time did people- it wasn't a long time of possibility- did anyone emigrate to Palestine or, I mean, before '48, or – elsewhere?*

I don't- I'm trying to remember now. Well, the first thing that, in terms of actual going to Palestine comes to my mind, is- in 1944, and this is really not post-war but talking about Aliya, if you can call it that, the- there was quite a famous story, as it later turned out, of a- a negotiation between the Hungarian Zionists and the Germans. And opinions differ and records differ and all the rest of it, who initiated all of this. But it became known as the 'Trucks for Lives' or- or- or 'Blood for trucks' deal, whereby Eichmann, who led the very small contingent of SS-stroke-Gestapo troops in- in Hungary, because most of the Hungarian persecution of Jews were very efficiently and carefully carried out by the Hungarian fascists. There were only about 200 with Eichmann, who came. The rest of the German troops were there en- en route to the front and- and also back in March of '44, to stop Hungary changing sides in the war which the Hungarian governor at the time intended to do. Anyway, Eichmann realised that he had a very strong possible hand in a- acquiring some physical support for the German war effort. They were running short of things like transport - kind of what- what you might call infrastructure in today's terminology - for the war. And he said- there's this popular myth going around that Jews can reach anywhere in the world and they have power beyond their numbers, et cetera, et cetera. Maybe through the Jewish connection he can conduct some deal with the Allies whereby he would let the last million Jews that

were now more or less in- in Hungary surviving, escape in exchange for goods from America and- and- and Britain, primarily America.

**[2:03:20]**

And the- the access to this would be through the Hungarian Zionists. And if they would reach the external Zionist forces or- or organisations, they could come to a deal. And the way it was going to be set up – I’m kind of paraphrasing it – is that there will be an initial trial, that if he would let maybe a- a small, large number of hundreds or a small number of thousands go, and then see if- if the Jews turn up with the- with the nominated goods in exchange, then the whole thing could turn into something much bigger. And the Zionists involved, they had a committee of about six or seven people, of whom the best known was my uncle, heading it up, and a guy- guy called Rudolf Kasztner. And because my uncle had his command of respect with the Hungarian government, and Kasztner had a bit more international connections, was also a good linguist and a lawyer, they decided that the contact should be split between- the lead contact. Kasztner would deal with the Germans and my uncle would deal with the Hungarian authorities. And in fact through that contact, my uncle managed to set up some orphanages and also help with these protected houses. And they managed to save a- a fairly large number of thousands, one way or another, five- or six thousands orphans for sure. And the protect- protected houses maybe gave, gave rise to ten- fifteen thousand survivors. Anyway-

*Sorry, what was your uncle’s full name again?*

Ottó Komoly.

*Ottó Komoly.*

**[2:05:45]**

And he- he- he’s been recognised after the war. Unfortunately, the- the other half of the negotiations acquired, for all the wrong reasons, a lot of notoriety. What actually happened, and this kind of goes back to where you first asked your question, was that this initial trade that Kasztner set up with Eichmann, meant the assembly of one train which later became

known for the obvious reasons as the 'Kasztner Train' - would leave Budapest- it was in mid-June '44. Destined for, originally they were talking of Palestine. As it happened, it then became dir- something to be directed to Spain, which eventually ended in transit to Bergen Belsen, which was a bit of a frightening stop for them. And ultimately in Switzerland. And then the people on that train had a choice whether to go to Palestine or- or other places of- of their choice, which is another diversion. But obviously the Zionist committee had a- a say in who goes on the train. And what they decided was, because not only was there the deal in-going to include the goods from the Allies, Eichmann also wanted to make some personal profit and profit for some of his associates in- in Hungary at the time. The two or three prime candidates for that. So he asked for the Hungarian Jewish community to come up with a large sum in cash. And I think, if I'm correct in saying this, the price he stated was a thousand dollars per head. And of course the average Hungarian could not come up with that kind of money. And what they decided was that they would let a small number of- of the very rich go on the train, and their families, but they had to provide a disproportionate amount of the money which they proceeded to do, both in cash, and in jewellery and the like. And that would allow them to put a- a lot of other people on the train, which- I- I studied the- the list on the train; it was a very mixed bunch. It included some Zionists. It included relatives of- of the Zionist committee who obviously had a- a reason to put some of their relations on, some of Kasztner's family, who originally lived in what previously used to be Romanian occupied Hungary, who by this time had travelled to- to Hungary. And- and a general- a general mix of people. I actually generated a spreadsheet to- to look at them and they really were a very- a very mixed bunch. A lot of them weren't even Hungarian Jews.

*And your uncle as well? Did he go?*

**[2:09:39]**

And my uncle, obviously he had the chance. He- he refused to go on the train. He asked his wife, and she refused. And of his siblings, everybody - bar one - turned it down. He asked my- my mother if he- if she wanted to go and she said, no way, she was sitting tight until she would find out what happened to my father. So ultimately what happened was that the one sister he put on the train, he asked to take his daughter with. So, this is the- the one Aliyah in the- in my family, Komoly, in today's terms, of the Komoly family as it's known in Hungarian. So she was the one.

*And she went to – Palestine?*

**[2:10:46]**

And she went to- she ended up in Palestine. The- the sister came back to Hungary after the war, from Switzerland.

*Why did your uncle refuse to go? Why did he not want to go on the train?*

He said he- he had a job to do in standing up to whatever purpose he could serve, to stay there, negotiate, carry on. By, by this time the- certain members of the Hungarian then-government- Hungarian government went through two or three shifts, by and large turning more and more extreme. By- by October in fact it was a- a fascist government with the Arrow Cross in charge prime minister. But there were a couple of ministers in that government who could see Hungary losing the war. And they were beginning to look beyond a lost war treaty and wanted to save their own skin. And they were in discussions with my uncle. He was actually asked if he would take on, secretly, a ministerial post in a post-war Hungarian government. And he said, “No way, am I going to be, as a Jew, in a Hungarian government.”

*And what happened to him, post-war?*

**[2:12:09]**

What happened personally to him, unfortunately, is a very sad story. People around him could see that every day, and any day, he was in personal danger because he was such a prominent person. And first the Red Cross offered him to him and his wife to move in with their Swiss representative in the Hotel Ritz, where they had a set of apartments, I think, or suites. Something like that. And he moved in there. And then one of his helpers on- on the committee, a man called Szamosi, whose daughter I met less than a year ago in fact, in America, who told me part of this story. He- this guy Szamosi got a job with the Spanish Embassy, who lent him a car that he used in my- in supporting the Zionist Federation delivering food and clothing to the ghetto and to the orphanages that my uncle set up - and to the Jewish hospitals. And he kept saying to my uncle, “Look, even if you are with the Red

Cross, these” - excuse the word – “bastards will not respect that ad infinitum. You’ll be safer at the Spanish Embassy. I can get you and your wife in there. Let me take you there.” And eventually, eventually, eventually my uncle said, “OK, you can collect me on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.” They agreed that date. I- I know this from meeting the man’s daughter. And he got the- Szamosi got in the car to fetch my uncle, was on his way to the Ritz- and by this time the Russians were bombarding the- the artillery and the car got hit en route to the hotel. So he never got there. He was- he got taken to a hospital. In the meantime, a couple of Arrow Cross guys turned up on the 31<sup>st</sup> - or is it the 1<sup>st</sup> of January? Saying to my uncle, “Our- the leader wants to have a meeting with you. Will you come with us?” And - unwisely he agreed. They said, “It’s only a half-hour meeting, come with us.” And he got taken away. In the meantime, Szamosi got out of the hospital, jumped back into the car, went to fetch him. But by this time he had gone. So, you know, the whole thing had been- could the clock wind back twenty-four hours, he would have survived. As it is, he disappeared like my father did and lots of others, and it’s been assumed that he got killed on- on the river Danube as- as all the others.

**[2:12:09]**

*And his wife?*

His wife survived with the Red Cross. And then after the war, when- when she found out about her daughter, she went on Aliyah and they set up in- in Israel. And- I always regret that when as, as people in their young-to-middle-ages tend to do, when I met up with my cousin and- and aunt, in the- in the late 50s and 60s I haven’t quizzed them more about all the happenings of those days. Because they would have been adult enough to tell me a lot more, as it happened. As it is, I- I got from my, from my uncle’s grandson. My cousin. I got hold of his diary of those days, which makes some very sad reading. It’s- it’s not a very detailed diary, but it gives me a very good impression of all the stresses and strains and horrors. I mean, one of the things that I- I noticed from it, for example, is that- I mentioned to you that event when my father was taken away, the last day that he was home. My mother contacted my uncle and said, “For God’s sake, what can you do? You have some- some reach. Could you possibly get- get- get hold of your brother?” And my uncle is- is writing kind of just a couple of words in despair of, “What can I do? I’ll try.” But there is no- in- in- in the diary there is no conclusion. And then the same happened when his other brother’s- who was the chief engineer - his wife got taken on one of these foot marches to Auschwitz late- late in- in



the year. He tried to rescue her and somehow never managed to. He managed to get a car, I think, some- through some miracle to- to follow the marchers on the road and they never managed to bring her back either. So, it's all- I- I- I was going to say "missed opportunities"- it- Really, the opportunities were never there, for any of them.

*OK. Tomi, I think we should have a break now because-*

Good. Going.

**[2:18:30]**

*Yes, we talked about your uncle and his role with Kasztner and the Kasztner train, but I think we should go back to your life, and come back to it at the end of the interview. So, we left you at technical college-*

Yes.

*Finished your school, managing to get into university.*

Yeah.

*And what did you- what did you study and how- how did it progress from there?*

Well, I got to university. Studied mechanical engineering. Completed my first year, including serious study of Marxism and Russian and all that kind of thing, which seemed to be part of an education of a good Communist engineer. And- I concluded somehow, not necessarily speaking it out loud, that you just had to be selective in who you speak to, what you say, what you profess, you believe in or you- you- your background is bad enough as it is, don't generate any more difficulties for yourself. "Stay low, and- and you might make it in society", kind of conclusion. Which wasn't- in- in- in the new system, notionally anti-Semitism was kept under control, so it wasn't any more about being Jewish or not. But it- it was about my background and my- my sins of- from my father, so to speak. And I just wanted to get- qualify, and be able to make a living, basically. And we got into 1956, and- there were some mutterings about people not being happy with the system as it was

operating, because all the- all the talk about equality and- and endless possibilities, et cetera, in practice didn't work out like that. There were still privileged people, but from a different source. And there were injustices, and certainly no possibility to speak out against the regime. It was a one-party system; people could either vote for the party or not at all. So we always had ninety-nine percent election results. And- and I- I actually consc- consciously chose to participate in youth movements and the like, to earn some brownie points. To- to obliterate the- the black marks against my father. And so, when it- whenever we- that is how I got to university, partly. Anyway, the - not talking about myself, but the - general population, in particular the student population in Hungary at the time, they be- began raising their voices. And in October, they went on the streets. Who- I don't know how it happened. And I know, and I- I was also involved in sport. I was playing basketball. And I was at a training session, when we got the news about a shooting in town. And people had very high hopes that any moment the system will collapse and everything will be alright. It will be a fresh start. And only when I later- when I got home and started looking around, we realised that things have not settled down. And then we learned- I, I had no physical part in any of the student uprising at- at the time. I- I really had second-hand information.

**[2:23:30]**

But one day I went out for a walk on one of the main thoroughfares in Budapest. And I knew that they had lynched some of the Communist Party members and also members of the armed or unarmed secret service. And when I walked down the street, I found that not very far from where we lived - I know the exact spot. I can show you today - hanging from one of the lamp posts was a secret policeman. And people were gathered around him and kicked there his dead body. And very unseemly. But what really got me and- and upset me: pinned to his front was a notice which said, "This will happen to every Communist and Jew." And it's the first time, as it happens, that I saw an anti-Semitic slogan, because it had been suppressed officially. You could have been put into jail for anti-Semitism. What I only found out very much later was that the students, in their innocence, when they had a bit of power for a few days, they decided to release political prisoners. And that was quite discriminate. So, amongst the people that the communists have jailed, there were also fascists, who had been on long jail sentences, and these people got out as well. And as the days rolled on, it was obvious - well, very obvious from the side that I have seen - that these people were beginning to twist the movement in a direction which was very unsavoury. And when I read that notice I said

“Well, I’ve been quietly displeased with the system that I lived in. It looked for a few moments that that might come to an end. But if it does come to an end and it turns the way that this lynching suggests, do I then want to live in this country?” And it took me a very short time to decide that having learned that in the big upheaval the borders to Austria became quite porous. The troops had been brought to Budapest, and a few months previously I think they removed the minefields, or so they said. And I thought it was worth taking-taking the risk. And my- my mother very unselfishly, or bravely, agreed that I should try to, well, escape, virtually. But she would not come with me because if I don’t succeed, somebody had to keep our accommodation and hold the fort. It just so happened, quite coincidentally- because up till 1956, the foreign travel was almost impossible for the ordinary Hungarian. But my granny with whom we lived, has been hoping for ages to get in touch with her son that she’s not seen- seen since 1939. And he sent her an invitation. And she was one of the first people to get a- a temporary exit visa to go and meet up with him. And so prior to the uprising, she had gone to Vienna where she had relations, hoping to meet my uncle. So it was like if I managed to get across to Austria, totally unexpectedly, I would have some kind of a- a linkage and a- and a chance of some assistance. Who knows what.

**[2:28:04]**

*But did she stay? Did she come back to Hungary, or...?*

No, she- she was at that moment still in Vienna.

*Yes.*

So when I first decided to go, so to speak, she would have been there with open arms. We didn’t know what the relatives in Vienna would think about an extra arrival, because we hadn’t been in touch with them since the war. And, so that was I suppose some kind of reassurance for my mother. And she stayed and I went and without going into a- a lot of detail, I had three attempts. I was caught twice. But there was such upheaval in those days that nobody took dramatic action against you immediately. They imprisoned me for a couple of days on- near the border. And they put a mark in my- everybody had a personal identity document and sort of, “We’ll deal with you later”, kind of thing. And when I went for the third time I actually managed to sneak across.

*So how did you try the first two times? How did you?*

The first two times, maybe naively, maybe not, I just got to the railway station, took a train to within twenty kilometres of the border and then I got off the train. I didn't think I would be quite so brave as to go right up to the border. And then I went and tried to walk. I knew I was risking either or both discovery, or being blown up. But none of those happened.

*By yourself?*

**[2:29:46]**

The first time I went by myself. The se- the second time I went with a friend- no. The first time I went with a friend. And we got detached and his- he got- he actually got across. So the second time his father volunteered to come with me. He had a bit of a conscience I suppose. And, we got actually stopped- the train got stopped by guards. And they got us all off the train. And they were about to release me, I think, when my father's friend came and thought he was being helpful. And he tried to bribe the guard with his watch, to let me go. Whereupon the guard got extremely bolshy and upset. He actually took- I don't know what happened to- to the father. I think he got into serious trouble after that. But I- I got imprisoned again and sent- taken back to Budapest. And the third time, through some kind of a- a secret network of communications, somebody told us that if I got to a particular village and went to a certain address, for some monies, there would be somebody who showed me the way across. And in fact at that address I met with a woman and- and her small child. And the three of us went with this so-called helpful individual. Ran straight into a border patrol, which, with hindsight I'm quite sure was intentional. I- I think they had a set-up whereby they would fleece the escapees of everything that they had and they would share the splits- the spoils. And that's how it operated. However, after handing over all my money and the little food and drink I had on me, the guard let us go. And I was free to walk across the border. So, in a way, the last escape was the least eventful, although I was obviously dead scared that I'd be taken back again. And there was a very organised system on the Austrian border by that time. Farmers in their tractors were driving up and down with lights, flashing lights, so it was very easy to get a- a lift from one of those. And I was taken to some school or some such place and given some food and drink.

[2:32:40]

*Where was this, in which part of...?*

I've no idea. I mean I- I know the Hungarian side where it was, but I've no idea-

*So on the Hungarian side, where was it?*

It was near a place called Mosonmagyaróvár. And- and I talked to somebody and I- I- I knew, knowing about my grandmother, I said, I don't really want to rely on these- refugee camp or anything. I don't want to stay here. I'd like to get to Vienna. And somebody very kindly bought me a bus ticket to go to Vienna. And I had the address. And to everybody's joy and merriment, I turned up at my great-aunt's apartment in Vienna and met my grandmother. And in a few days- you can find out and apply that, how everything works. You bump into people in the same situation. We had to register with the police. We were given a- a so-called, I think they called it a "Grey Card". Which enabled us to get some food every day. And also they gave us addresses where we could get some clothing. And, very quickly I found out that there was a special place- this was Christmas vacation. It was a student hostel where they temporarily allowed student refugees to house themselves. So I got a shared room there, where I made a very good friends with another non-Jewish Hungarian. And our- our lives got kind of intertwined for a quite a few years. I'm still in touch with him. And that was the first time, probably though my relatives there, that I found out there were some Jewish organisations there who were looking out for Jewish refugees. And I went to see them and we got some more assistance. And quite possibly they put me in touch with a kind of- how call it? - a university committee or, a, a- a select team that came from London. And they were representing a charitable organisation called The Ford Foundation, this is American, who every year have a certain money aside- money set aside. And this year in fifty- well it was '57 now, they decided to give it- to set up a- a scholarship fund for Hungarian students. And strangely enough, you could get a grant to study in any- certainly in any European country. I'm not sure about other places in the world. But definitely not in the US of A. And by this time, I'd also been put in touch with a- the- the particular sister of- of my grandmother who sent us the parcels previously. And his daughter and her husband got in touch with me, and very kindly offered that if I applied for a- an American visa they would sponsor me. And

more than that they- they had two daughters, they would be happy to adopt me and put me through the rest of my studies, if I only applied. So then being already partly through the application for the Ford Foundation Scholarship, where they asked me where I wanted to study, and I said, “Well, look, I want to do engineering. So that indicates to me countries like England, Germany, Switzerland, primarily. And I also have in mind to learn a language where- which I can use as internationally as possible. And that really probably- I’m not that keen on Germany. People say that Switzerland can be difficult as an immigrant. And I- I would choose England.

**[2:37:47] [sound break]**

*Yes - England. You chose England.*

So, I had the dilemma which way to- to turn. So I applied for an American visa and I let my application for the Ford Foundation run. And I said whichever comes through first, that’s where I’m going to go. Obviously America qualified on account of engineering as well, so it was fine. And- and I got a notification from the Ford Foundation that they got the visa for me, and, “We’ll- you’ll be going in a few weeks.” By this time, my grandmother left Vienna. My uncle insisted that she wouldn’t go home, that she would go and live with him. He did- he considered it his role and duty to look after his- his widowed mother.

*In Kenya?*

In Kenya. And my grandmother, I mean, having lived a life where there was one- one air letter every six weeks and that was her only contact with the son, she didn’t really know what to- she was moving in to. As it happens, she moved into a very nice life, but it was good for her. And-

*What about your mother?*

My mother was left on her own. And I think being the independent person she was, and being a wage earner, other than missing me, she was probably left in a better position than she’s been for a long time, in everyday terms. I’m not talking emotionally. Because property, not- not owning property, but rental property in that system, was an asset. And she managed later

on to trade this rather large set up that she inherited as- as the incumbent, she traded it down to a much better quality, better located, nice little one bedroom flat. And she was very happy with that until very much later. By 1966, when I got my first job, I offered that she could come and live with me. Which is what happened. She- she came to England at that time. But that's further down the road. So- after my grandmother left, I- I was asked to go to a- literally a camp. The student accommodation wasn't available anymore because the students came back. And we moved in a place called Wiener Neustadt. It's a very large-

**[sound interruption]**

*Excuse me-*

**[2:41:02]**

*Yeah-*

There was a very big Hungarian contingent, but we soon realised that inside of that contingent, there was a smaller group of us with scholarships and the like. And although the accommodation wasn't brilliant, we were in bunk beds three high and- food was fine, place was warm. We didn't really want a great deal more at that time. And we were given more or less a, a free roaming facility in Vienna. It was very easy. We had free transport on trams and trains. And- there was a- an outfit called the WOK - *Wiener Öffentliche*- something with a 'K' - *Kuche*, or some kind of a- a kind of series of- mix between a shop and a canteen. [WÖK- *Wiener öffentliche Küchenbetriebsgesellschaft*] Self- self-service restaurant, very low level. And we were given vouchers to eat in these places. Being a twenty year old very hungry, we also went around asking people in the camp who were about to leave, to leave behind their tickets. And sometimes we would have two lunches and two dinners a day.

*So you were official refugees.*

We were official refugees, yes. We were given a refugee card. And a refugee in those days, particularly from a Communist country, was a treasured individual, which is a very nice change compared with what happens to refugees nowadays in Europe. And- but notwithstanding any and all of this, we also had our own little community. We got to know

each other, that we were all going to come to England. Started forming friendships, et cetera. And one day the news came that we were leaving the next day. And really I- I can't even imagine how it all got organised. It- it was done beautifully. A bus came, took us to the railway station, we were put- by, by that time we acquired various bits and pieces of clothing and luggage and God knows what. We each had something to carry. Treasured items. And the train was a special train. It- it went non-stop no change through Austria, Germany, Belgium, on- on to the ferry. Ostend- Ostend to- to- to Cal- to Dover. And even on the British train, we didn't know where we were heading for. No idea. I only know that retrospectively, that we- that the train got specially diverted to travel around London.

**[2:44:29]**

And we got taken into the Midlands to an old RAF camp in a place called Hednesford near – Oh, what is the nearest place there? It's kind of south of Stoke[-on-Trent]. And on, on the train journey, we would make certain stops at certain stations, both in Germany and in England. And people would be waiting on the platform with hot food and cold food and drinks and everything we needed, which was quite uneventful on, on the Continent. But we had our first shock when we got fed on the British train, because we saw a lot of stuff which we had never imagined existed before. Pies, and puddings and- and whatever it was. It was totally and absolutely strange way of feeding us. We enjoyed it very much. And the other lasting memory I have from that trip- as we passed cities, in those days the modern lighting was these sodium-based lamp posts, which gave this orange glow. And we had never seen anything like it before. It was always the old-fashioned lightbulbs. And we thought we- we had now hit utmost modernity. And we- we really- really arrived, arrived in- in- in wonderland. So we got to the camp. And it was quite comfortable; the huts were heated. It was still kind of wintertime, just- it was March, 17<sup>th</sup> of March that got stamped into my arrival document.

**[2:46:31]**

17<sup>th</sup> of March?

Fifty-seven. [1957] And- and we had too much spare time; that really was the problem. And we tried to amuse ourselves. I had one somewhat unfortunate adventure into something else.



One of our colleagues who spoke some English, managed to get a job with the camp governor or whatever he called himself, who had a- an old Morris car that was- the engine wasn't functioning properly, and he asked if there were any engineers amongst us. We didn't realise at the time with our very miniature skilled knowledge of English, that the word 'engineer' in English refers to a different breed of people. They think people with a spanner and a hammer are the engineers. So they, they- they did- they weren't looking for university student skills. So two- two of us volunteered to sort out his engine, and we just asked for some tools. And we dismantled his engine. I don't see much point in explaining the details of the- of the disaster. Suffice it to say that in the end, he very decently paid us for our effort and then he had to call in a mechanic to put together his car again, because we couldn't. So that was one interesting thing. And the other event I can remember, the twenty or so of us were very kindly invited to the home of the local vicar and his wife, for afternoon tea. And of course we ate about twice as much as they ever expected a number of people like that to eat. And we- we couldn't really have any conversation; there was still only this one person who spoke English. And she saw fit to deliver a little speech at the end of it. Except that she made a little mistake. And she said to the vicar's wife, "Thank you very much for your hostility." [laughs] We only discovered later on that it wasn't quite the right word for the purpose. But-

*So you didn't speak any English?*

No.

*At that time.*

**[2:49:20]**

No. Not a- not a word. And a couple of us... Jewish people in- in that crowd, somehow heard on the grapevine, and I honestly don't know how that came about, that in London we would find some Jewish organisation that could help us. So rather than sitting there and waiting for all we knew it would be a number of months before anything would happen. And we were really living in peace and we were being well treated, but it was a waste of time. So we managed to persuade the man in charge to give us ticket to London. And we acquired the address- I think it was called The Jewish Refugees' Committee in Tottenham Court Road. They had an office. And we turned up here. And it was staffed by a bunch of enthusiastic

middle aged ladies who hugged and kissed us. [laughing] In no time at all we got some more clothing and more what have you. And they sorted out placing in Willesden Green- Dollis Hill to be precise, I think- yeah, Dollis Hill it was, to be lodgers at a Polish B & B. And these were- I had two- two encounters with Polish war veterans. These were people who came over with the Polish Army when the Germans occupied them. And I have to say that neither of those two encounters I treasure too much. They were not exactly pro-Jewish, and they were both profiteering, so- but I won't- won't generalise from that.

*OK.*

**[2:51:35]**

But anyway, we had shelter. We were given a small weekly allowance, whatever that was, which covered our lodging and gave us a teeny bit of spending money. And we, we got put in touch, through- we- we went and visited the- the person, well not exactly- the- the lecturer and his secretary who saw us in Vienna. And the secretary became a kind of mother to all Hungarian student refugees. And you could always go and call on her for assistance. We also discovered, interestingly enough, that in their department there was a lecturer, whose name I forget- she, she was called Miss Marshall. And I forget the man's name at the top, what his name was. But this lecturer spoke fluent Hungarian. God knows how and why. She- he was English. But whenever any one of us tried to speak Hungarian to him, he said, "I'm already perfect in Hungarian. It's time you got perfect in English." So we didn't get very far with him.

*But you had the scholarship, so-*

I had the scholarship, but the scholarship would only start in- in the autumn.

*Right.*

**[2:53:00]**

And this was still kind of May, June time. And they said, just, "This is how you get your," I think we had to collect our money weekly. And, "Keep in touch and we'll let you know about

the next move.” And so the four, five, six of us quickly formed a little group of mutual support. We were allowed to go to the Union building at- next to the University of London. Next to Senate House. And I very quickly learned to play snooker, as one of my new British skills. And we would have games- played games of bridge. And we even discovered a little open-air swimming pool. We didn’t realise how rare it was in England in those days. And we went there. It was one of those rare hot summers. And enjoyed London! Lots of walks, because we didn’t really want to waste a lot of money on buses and the like. We didn’t have the free passes anymore. And then, come late August, I think it was, we were told that in preparation for going to university or wherever we were destined, we would be given an English course in Edinburgh. And again, somebody miraculously arranged our travel, and being met at the other end and they served us up- I think three of us ended up sharing a flat very near city centre Edinburgh. And we had these daily- daily lessons. Very old fashioned. The lecturer was telling- telling us funny stories that somebody goes visiting the solicitors, “Can I speak to Mr. Smith?” “Sorry, he’s not in.” “Well, can we then see Mr. Smith?” “Well, I’m afraid he’s on leave.” “And can I see to- Mr. Smith?” And when you get to the fourth Mr. Smith, actually he’s in, and you can go and see him. And he- the- the teacher thought this was very funny, and- and he also must have thought that we learned a great deal of English from this, but- we struggled along.

**[2:55:29]**

I also had a nice experience there. Somehow or other we found out that there was a Jewish Society at the university, which was part-functioning during- during the summer half term. And they invited us a couple of evenings to just be with them in the- in their club. And then I paired up with this particular Hungarian non-Jewish boy whom I met in the refugee camp in- in Austria. And we- we deci- we decided that we could try to find accommodation in Glasgow where we would be together. And on a- on a kind of trial run to Glasgow we actually located a place, and that was my second Polish landlord. And so we were housed there - bed and breakfast basis. And for a year we stuck with that. And then we were both pretty displeased with the circumstances, and decided to set up our own accommodation for the next two years. I was- I was very mercifully put on the second year of a four-year course. They accepted my one year from Hungary.

*And what was the course?*

The course was in mechanical engineering. So I found myself in a strange situation where I hardly understood the language, but in those days most of the lecturing was done with the assistance of a blackboard. So they would not only draw but write things on the blackboard. And I was familiar with eighty percent of the topic of- certainly of the engineering and scientific aspects of the course. So I knew what they were writing. And I- I literally used it as a- as a language course, translating for myself, having learned to take in Scottish accents which varied from lecturer to lecturer. And we were very happy with our shared accommodation. We took in a, eventually, a third Hungarian to make it more economical. And it was one of these, what in those days they called a sandwich course. Where you would study for six months and then supposedly spend the other six in industry.

[2:58:24]

*Right.*

Which was very helpful, because the scholarship we had, assumed that we were in full time study. So, although we ended up usually spending only about four months in industry, or five, leaving a few weeks for vacation, the earnings of that period were literally savings, as far as we were concerned. So we were both very interested in travel, and because we had been totally cut off the west. And at the first opportunity, which was the summer of '58, the two of us went hitchhiking in Europe and travelled many kilometres. And that- that became a habit later on.

*OK, so maybe if you could summarise your professional life a little bit for us. [inaud]*

Yeah. Well summarising the professional life- I graduated in- in Glasgow what they called the Royal College of Science and Technology which became later [University of] Strathclyde. And when they offered me a- a BSc later on, or retrospectively, I declined. I thought I'd stick with my old title. And, in fact, I got two extensions to my scholarship from the Ford Foundation. They obviously had less spent than they anticipated. And I got sponsored for a Masters' course in Birmingham in studies which broadly led me, or would have led me, to the aircraft industry until that I found out that because of my so-called Communist background I would not be trusted with state secrets. And then I went on another

three years of academic research at Imperial College, still- still on the same grant. And at Imperial College I got introduced to one of their industrial sponsors at ICI, Imperial Chemical Industries, as it then was. And that- that led to my first job. So that's roughly my- my road into a grown up capacity.

**[3:01:04]**

*And what sort of job? What- what- what did you do?*

At ICI I started as a design and development engineer and- and research- more like research and design engineer. And got into a branch of plastics referred to as film making - plastic films. And because a lot of that production area was based on- on chemical engineering, I kind of developed into a chemical engineer. A bit of a- a mish-mash. And because ICI, being a large multi-national firm, they had a policy with graduate intake of putting them into various capacities irrespective of experience to- to learn more and be more broadly trained. So, going from one job to the- I had- must have had six or seven postings in, in ICI. I also became experienced in civil engineering, architecture, and in the last few years of- of my work with them, I accidentally specialised in design of laboratories. And when I- I had to ret- in ICI your contract says, from day one, you retire when you're sixty-two. So I decided at that point rather than just live comfortably at home to use my skill in laboratories. I then set up a consultancy which I continued for, I don't know, a dozen years before I came to the present con- condition, where I- I am truly retired.

*And was it through the work of- in ICI that you came to this part of the country?*

Yes. I- I got a job in- in Cheshire. And I looked around. Knowing what ICI is like in terms of moving you around, I found that there were about five possible sites where I might be working. And we chose Wilmslow as the most, most central location so that I- we would not have to move again. By then we had a four year old daughter and later on we had our second daughter.

*So tell us a little bit, what happened in your private life?*

**[3:03:50]**

Private life is very interesting, because while I was in London, I led the usual kind of student life, partying at the weekends. And having worked very hard both in Glasgow and Birmingham, again, to earn my stripes and make sure that I- I came out with kind of top marks everywhere, in- in London at last I felt I could relax. And I- I actually started participating in student life which I had never done before. So the odd glass of beer after a sports game, or I really managed to perfect my game of bridge with a partner. We became the British University Champions while I was in London. And that kind of gave me a- a lot- lot more fun later on as well. But, going back to family life, while we were- while I was in- in London- and again, I had a shared apartment with, with this same friend, who- who by this time had a job with Phillips, I think in- near London. And on on a Saturday night we would take off to go to a- a so called they called "hop"- they called it "hop". A "university hop", which was a formal- formal-ish dance event. And we decided- that particular week we went I think it was Queens' College. And coincidentally a young lady called Gill with her friends decided to go to the same event. And I asked her to dance, and I mean, in one sentence, that was it. And we met in March of '66, March or April, maybe. And by the summer we were engaged. And by the end of October we were married. And that really is when the interesting story starts in terms of me and Judaism. Because that was my first serious contact with Jewish society in Britain. And, she came from a- a kosher family. Not hugely observant but in terms of *kashrut* they, she was very serious. She- she lived in a- a shared apartment and shared- two Jewish girls and a Catholic girl. And as the story goes, they agreed to have kosher six days a week and fish on a Friday. This was the- [both laughs] multi- multi-sectional arrangement. And, when we first started getting- talking about engagement and getting married, obviously the question arose what kind of home environment and what kind of family we might have. And in terms of just two of us being there, I- I certainly saw no reason why I could or should deny her the kosher home. And- and it was going to be her responsibility. She was still in the middle of completing her studies as- as a lawyer. So she- she had more free time. I was working five days, sometimes long days, a week. And travelling occasionally. So if she wanted to have a kosher home we were going to have a kosher home. I did not volunteer to maintain that when I was at work, or whatever. And we- it's not so much when we had our children, because we had the first child in 1971, in London, where- just to add to go- to it's not to complete- to start my Jewish story. She asked me a couple of times to go to a synagogue. We lived in Edgware. And I went and frankly I found- maybe it was because we chose the High Holidays for my first dip into that particular

environment- I found it very disagreeable. People were not paying a lot of attention to the service really. People were there to socialise, which I didn't think- if- if all I wanted was socialising, I don't- didn't see why I would want to do it in a synagogue. Because particularly I had no- no background, no knowledge; I didn't know what was going on in the place. So we gave- gave up on that, and then she didn't push me. And- but later when- not so much when the second child came along, but when we moved into Wilmslow, and the- the topic came up that the- the elder- elder child would have to be sent to school. And also this was the first time that the possibility arose to join a Jewish community.

**[3:10:06]**

Because where we lived before, after London, we were in Scotland on, on- Scotland and Cumbria on two of my jobs. There were- we were, I think one of two Jewish families. And it really looked to me like- in terms of bringing up children, from my secular background, there was not a great deal that I could contribute. I could contribute to their general education and all the rest of it, but when it came to any kinds of morality or- or the like, she could bring a lot more to it. And Judaism can bring more to it than I- I ever can. So when we got into what I- I call it's not much different in Cheshire and Manchester. We got into this area with Jewish communities we decide- decided to- to join a synagogue. And when our elder daughter started going on Sundays, for her education to *cheder*, it was some miles away from here. And I was the loose end. I didn't really want to drive the distance there and back twice. And the- the rabbi decided to make available to people some Jewish studying, one to one, in- in the same period as the children were studying. So I volunteered for this. And that was really my first serious exposure to- to a prayer book and Hebrew and all the rest of it. And- as I'm telling you the story, I, I realise already that there is a- a roll-on from all of this. It's quite a complicated story. So, I became reasonably- we started going to synagogue - not every week. And, and we had to drive to get there, because there wasn't one where we lived. And the community and the rabbi knew that was happening, and they- they were quite accommodating about that. Nobody held it against us. So that- that I welcomed, because it was a level of tolerance, if you like, which, which I could appreciate. So it was a bit of give and take. And it was a very nice rabbi there in the first place, called Mickey Rosen, who- who tried to assist me in this. And of course the same thing got repeated with our second daughter. And- and they were both- both brought up with a knowledge about a kosher household. And just to take a little bit of a jump forward, they're both running a kosher household now. The

older daughter became very religious, by my terminology anyway. And I'm in a strange situation now of being surrounded by two daughters, a wife and seven grandchildren, who are all kosher, religious. Having come from my background, you can say that it's a- a bit of a miracle. There must be some hope still for the survival of Jews and Judaism if that kind of thing takes place.

**[3:14:17]**

*But you're pleased about it?*

I'm pleased about it, yes. Yeah. I'm not saying- I would definitely be lying I said that I- I'm wholly approving of everything that goes on in Jewish communities, or in between Jewish communities. There is a lot that I'm critical of. But I'm- I'm- quite pleased with the position that we have reached or I have reached. I don't think I would like to- to reverse it or anything like it.

*But you didn't anticipate it?*

I certainly did not anticipate it, no.

*Did-*

And some relatives back in Hungary took some time to adjust to it.

*What about your mother? How did she react to it- what was her...?*

**[3:15:05]**

My mother, I think, was quite critical, if I want to be honest. She- she probably- on the one hand, and that's the first time I'm thinking about it, she must have thought that being Jewish only brought her bad stuff. And why should she bring something to Judaism when Judaism didn't bring anything other than, to use an old Yiddish word "*tsores*", to her? And I guess also, the fact that a- a husband takes on the daughter's approach to life, probably does not lie very well with a Jewish mother. So, I'm not just being very analytical about it, but.



*So Judaism has- became more important to you. What about in general? What sort of identity did you want to pass on to your children, or, what was important?*

Well, it involves two or three things. First of all I wanted to become a British citizen at the first opportunity. And it took, in those days, five years before you could apply. And you needed four people to sponsor you. And I'm delighted to- to say that the four people that I asked uniformly expressed their delight of recruiting me to the- to the British community. And they recommended me and I- I got my citizenship. It was a bit of a strange experience when I had to swear an oath, and went to a solicitor's office, and he had to search around in his bottom drawer to find a Bible, because it was obviously not in everyday use. And I said, "Well, I don't know if it'll do for me but if it's ok for you, I'll- I'll swear on that." And then I received this official letter where some civil servant notified me that, "You are now a naturalised British citizen." And it was signed, "Your obedient servant". So that's the- the Britishness issue. Just remind me what brought us to the-

*I said about your identity-*

Identity, yes.

*Was it- so being British was important for you?*

**[3:17:47]**

So British is- is part of the identity. I also felt that having been closed off from the world-world for such a long time, in my youth, I really to some extent wanted to be a citizen of the world. And we travelled a lot. I- I took every opportunity- I think we had very few years when we didn't have a foreign holiday. The girls were brought up in that sense, that language and- and location is not everything. And they both learned languages at school. And I think we have been a little too successful in infusing that spirit into them, because the more *frum-* the- now lives in New Jersey, having lived in California before. And that's- so that's my- five of my grandchildren are. And the younger one, Tanya, she lives in Sydney Australia. So that's another two. And we're making substantial contribution to airline profits because we want to see them regularly. And is there anything more to say about identity?

*How would you define yourself, today, in terms of your own identity?*

My own identity is 100 percent British. I remember- when I left Hungary, they published a law there which said that everybody who left in '56 was stripped of his citizenship - so that was easy. And some years into the future, I received a note saying that if I wanted to reclaim my Hungarian citizenship, I could do it for £100. And I wrote back to them saying, "It only cost me £50 to become British. If you think I'm going to pay £100 for Hungarian, you must be kidding. I absolutely refuse." And when I hear people in the middle of the European debate, and Brexit, talk about themselves or their children for that matter, looking for Hungarian citizenship I say, "You must be crazy. I wouldn't dream about it for a second."

*You wouldn't take it?*

No. In more prosaic terms, if I see an England-Hungary football match, I definitely support England. And frankly, looking at what is going on in present-day Hungary, I'm totally and utterly disgusted with it. And I take every opportunity to raise my voice against Hungary and Hungarians on the basis of both past and present.

**[3:20:46]**

*And where do you think is your home today?*

My home is here. No other home.

*Is there anything you miss from- from Hungary, from Budapest? Do you have any nostalgia?*

Oh, very occasionally I suddenly come across a- a little quotation, or a song or a joke. Hungary, in particular Hungary's, Hungary's Jews, always had a joke for every situation. That is not the same here. But some- sometimes I hear a joke and I say, "That- that could be Hungarian." It's a different sense of humour, I think. I appreciate the English sense of humour as well. It's different.

*And did you talk about your past with your children at all, because we talked about before not talking and- what- what was not discussed, and...?*

Yeah. I think that- if I call it an accusation, I can raise it against myself. Because from vague recollection, I can say that when my children were, let's call it teenagers, a loose term, and I started talking about my childhood - and that was pretty loose. I mean, I'm not necessarily talking about Holocaust, or war, or anything like that, but - there was always, and I don't think that's anything to do with who they are or who I am. It's the usual kind of growing up thing, it is, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, we- we heard you talking about that. Don't- don't need to go into it again." So I kind of subconsciously got this message that it's of no interest to them. And by the time I started regretting it, it was almost like too late. And how do you- how do you sit down with a grown-up child and say, "Oh, by the way, fifteen years ago I forgot to tell you about my childhood"? There- there are very few prompts that occur in life. But when I started talking to schools, that presented an almost irresistible temptation or- or call, put it that way. To say, if you go and talk to thousands of- of strange children, strangers, surely you should talk to your- your own children *and* create the bridge to your grandchildren, or even if for the future.

**[3:23:40]**

*And are they interested?*

One- no, let- let me just introduce something else, because I realise that I left out a very interesting and- and a pretty critical point, I think, in our family history, and mine, talking about going through Judaism. Back in the 1980s or so, I participated in a bunch of courses which nowadays I suppose people would put under the cover, "alternative education" or "alternative thought" kind of thing. And quite a lot of people, family and friends, Gill and myself both participated in this course. It was called Landmark Education. And it's really, people called it a cult which it was not. It was self-awareness, and try- try to be who you are and not what you think people expected of me, or some image that you formed in your childhood or, some reaction to something that happened to you when you were younger. Just look at who you are and- and be it. And in one of the courses, I don't know how the thought came into my mind that what I missed out in being Jewish that a lot of Jewish people around me seemed to think very highly of, as a highlight of a Jewish boy's growing up, is having Bar

Mitzvah. And I was sixty-three, sixty-four at the time. And I went to see our rabbi in our community here, and asked him. I said, “In- next year, I’m going to be sixty-five. Which is five times thirteen. Do you think I could have a Bar Mitzvah? I think there is something missing in my life.” And he said, “I don’t have to consult any... great books of knowledge. You can always have a Bar Mitzvah. You choose that occasion. Fine. Great!” And, a friend of ours volunteered to work with me and teach me. And I went through that. And when the occasion came, we went through the works. And we had a major celebration, and we invited family and friends, and I had sweets thrown at me and all the usual things. And I think possibly that was a major occasion which created a- a different kind of bridge to- to my children. And that also was a contributory factor when a couple of years ago I started talking about my past, to make it a whole. And for them to understand where I came from and what my journey has been and why.

**[3:27:00]**

*And are your grandchildren interested? Are they of an age where they...?*

The two eldest in America are now aware of my background. In fact, one of them came for a few months to England- went to Gateshead to a seminary, where she studied religion. When she was eighteen. And I happened to be invited to- not a Jewish school, but one of the local schools there and- to- to give my talk. And I asked her if she wanted to come along and hear me talk. And she did. So I’m sure she shared it with her sister as well. The others I think will take some time before we reach the point where it makes sense for them.

*And when did you start talking for the Holocaust Educational Trust?*

2016.

*Right. So the last three years.*

Last three years. Yeah. Yeah.

*And what do you think made you start to talk about your experiences or what- what is your drive?*

Well, I'll tell you how it came about exactly. Strangely enough, this alternative education seems to step- get into my story here and there. I went to one of those events where they also invite outsiders to consider whether they want to do one of their courses. And I ended up talking to a, as it turns out to be, a Jewish lady who was another participant's mother. And she asked me, when it transpired that I was Jewish, about my experiences. And I shared it with her. And she said, "Do you go and talk to schools about it? Because a lot of survivors do that." And I said, "Well, I'm not entitled because I'm not a survivor. I have not been to one of the camps." And she said, "Nonsense. You are here. You could have been killed. You survived. And you realise we only have," – I forget now the number she mentioned. "We only have fifty seven people in this country who- who- who are still able and can do that. Why don't you have a word with the Educational Trust- Holocaust Educational Trust, and see if it's something that you could or you would want to do." And I- I made the contact, and they said, "Absolutely, you have every right to speak about it. Let- give us a little summary, a CV what happened to you, who you are." And they said, "That's fine. You decide what to tell them, and off you go." And I- I slowly built it up from beginning to where we- where I am at the moment.

**[3:30:08]**

*What is your main message to the children when you speak? Or what- what do you want to convey?*

The main message is really- I'm not too sure whether I have to say two-fold or three-fold. But in- in so many words, I always tell them that Jews don't, unfortunately, have an exclusive right to be victims of a Holocaust. We- we may be victims of the biggest one known, where a race is almost eliminated from the face of the earth. But- and I- I gave give them examples of other Holocausts, present and going back 100 or more years. And therefore, part of the purpose of talking to them, is to stop those things happening again.

*OK.*

The other message, particularly nowadays, well, it was all there from the beginning, but certainly the last year and a half, unfortunately, is that out of those - and then I talk about - sorry, I should have said that. I- I often refer to genocide in general, and give them those examples. But the other kind of ongoing step from there, is that out of the present genocides, which take place, there are the masses of refugees who get treated very differently from what my experience was. And it would be really good for them to take away from it what difference it makes to people who lose their home, or country, or livelihood, or family or whatever it is, how they're received at the other end and how they are treated. And what future chance they are given. And the third point, yes, I- I knew there was a third one, which is buried really in the first thing I mentioned - and I got a hint of that from a speech made by a police- a London police chief of some denomination. I don't know where I came across it - who spoke about this after visiting Auschwitz. Where he mentions- bullying being the first step leading to all the things that happened in the 30s and 40s. When you pick on some individual or some minority, on whatever basis, race, religion, ethnicity, et cetera, et cetera. And that children can step into that situation if- if they see it happening in schools. Either- or, not taking the part of the bully, or coming out in defence of the person who is being bullied. Because if they don't, there is no- no end, po- potentially, to that growing into something much, much worse. And I- I give them some further evidence and proof and all the rest of it. And I, I actually close usually my- my talk with that quotation from the- from the policeman. And then later enlarge about bullying.

[3:34:17]

*Right.*

So, yeah, that's- that's my message.

*OK. Thank you. Tomi, what do you think effect did it have, your own A, the survival, and B, being a refugee or your refugee on your later life? Those two different aspects.*

Survivor and refugee. Well, survival - unfortunately message from that is negative. The message from that to me, is that being different can be, to put it mildly, problematic. And hence my- I don't know what you want- would want to call it. This will probably end up being dismissive of myself, but in order not to be different, you often go in life pretending not

to be different. So you join with people pursuing some interest, or you- you agree with opinions which other people express but you really disagree with. But you know that it won't be, to say the least, it won't be to your advantage to to be different. So you agree or you- you stay silent. And that was obviously starting in- in the persecution days. Matured in the Communist days, where I could see people who raised their voices against Communism put through mock trials, and prison sentences and executions. And what have you. Not that I was ever threatened with that, but it was in the conversation. And to some extent, it- it even existed certainly in the England I arrived in. Initially. England was a very much more stratified society in in those days. So that's why I'm saying the- the message is negative. And I don't really say this so that I would ever encourage anybody else taking that route.

*No, it's not- the impact-*

That's the impact. That's the impact. Yeah. Of being a refugee....

*Not knowing the language, not having any resources-*

**[3:37:12]**

I would ultimately say, I think I, I'm quite honest about that, that unless you're very unlucky, it's probably a positive input into your life. I had such drive when I got here with all what you just mentioned. Don't know the language? So get on with it. Learn it. I never had half a thought about what a lot of- never mind refugees, but immigrants in general do, even if they arrive with a bunch of money, or if they make a, you know, properly organised move, or whatever. They arrive and they say we want to retain our own little community, our language, our traditions. We shall be different. And that- my attitude has always been, you live in Britain, you learn English, you mix with them as much as possible. And this- with this friend of mine, we decided at some point we would only speak English amongst each other- you know, when we're alone. And to get there as quickly as possible. I had to be top of the class in Glasgow. As soon as the results came I- I rushed to the advertising boards to see that, certainly no lower than number three.

*Right. So it gave you drive.*

It gave me a positive drive, yeah. Now, it took me a long time, in- in- well into adult life, to come to appreciate that achievement as a- as, as understood in communities and in families and friends. Achievement of- of physical well-being or or financial well-being, what have you, is not the measure of how well you feel yourself. How- how- how successful you think you are, is not how successful you are in conventional terminology. Being the Managing Director of something or other is no substitute for coming home in the evening, sitting down in a chair, saying I had a- a good day. So I- I had to modify- I had to tame that instinct of drive and- and targeted living, in order to get a- a satisfactory life. Satisfying life.

*Because the secret to that is what? What- what do you think?*

The secret, and that in a way goes against what I just mentioned to you, the survival conclusions. The secret of that is to be yourself. Which nowadays I almost am going out of my way sometimes to the annoyance of people. If- if now I disagree with somebody I don't care what they think about me or about my opinions, or all the rest of it, I will tell them. Part is notwithstanding Europe, notwithstanding Trump, notwithstanding - you know, any, any morals, notwithstanding. I- I try to express where I am and where I think I want to be.

**[3:40:48]**

*Tomi, we- I have many more questions for you, but in- in view of our time pressure because we have to catch the train back. Maybe at the end it is appropriate that you just tell us a little bit about your opinion on the Kasztner - affair, or, since your uncle was on the Zionist committee maybe just tell us about your correspondence and I think that's a way of concluding. Yeah.*

Right. I think to frame what- what I want to say about the events in- in Hungary, and particularly we're talking again about survival or possibility of survival. I did mention that my uncle was head of the Hungarian Zionist Federation. And through a series of events, they- a, a small committee numbers vary between seven and nine I think, who were on that committee. They were approached by the SS contingent in Hungary in 1944 with a suggestion that the Germans were beginning to sense that they were losing the war. They haven't admitted this fully, but in any case they were short of supportive material, what people might call infrastructure, like transport and coffee and all sorts of other things. And



they felt- they- they knew about the differences between- amongst the Allies, between the Russians, the Communist side and the Anglo-American side. And they thought that they could, not quite drive, drive a wedge between them, but they might get a certain kind of support, primarily for the Americans in material terms, if they promised not to use it against them, but to use it against the Russians. There was a theory developing at the time that Germany and the Americans had a common enemy in the Soviets, kind of inherited from the time of the Russian Revolution. So, they wanted to test out the possibility with the Americans of what they called “Lives for goods” - or – “Trucks for blood”. Various such titles emerged later on, in discussing it - in the belief that the Zion- through the Zionists, through the Jewish communities in the west, this mythical Jewish power that exists everywhere. They - they could reach the appropriate authorities and they could have a deal, whereby they would release the – there- the were only a million or less Jews left, mostly in Hungary at that time. We’re talking about ’44. And if- if these were- people were released, then the Americans would support the German war effort in that particular fashion. The Zionists weren’t sure whether to believe it or not but they said, A, there is nothing wrong with testing it out and B, although they knew that they haven’t had any- anything of the magnitude or- or reach of the contacts that they had been attributed with, or assumed to have, let- let Eichmann think that they can, as long as there is a degree of benefit arising. And what Eichmann had in mind, was that this could be a step wise process testing out the ground. He would release a certain amount of people, they would receive a certain compensation, and if it works in the first place let’s get it- make it bigger. The Zionists at this point, in- on that committee, had an agreement that because my uncle had- had his standing with the Hungarian authorities including some government ministers, he would be the prime contact in that area, and they- they named it “Line A”. and a man called Rudolf Kasztner, who well, he had a fairly varied background but he was quite voluble about this topic. He would deal with the- with the Germans primarily, in these negotiations.

**[3:46:30]**

And the Germans also wanted some cash payment before any of this would go into action. And what happened was that the Zionists approached the small section of Hungarian Jewish society, the extreme rich, which they were, saying Kastner wants- “Eichmann wants a thousand dollars per person before we talk. We know most people can’t afford anything like that. Are you going to be willing and able to come up with the vast majority of the amount

and you can calculate the sum we're talking about?" And this actually happened, both in- in cash and international currencies and valuables, jewellery. The- the amount was brought together, which was kind of a deposit. And I think it was primarily meant for Eichmann and a couple of Lieutenants of- of his for their personal enrichment. And my uncle's role in this became to participate in selecting the people who would get on the train, which is obviously a- a horrifying task, whatever you may think about it. And I have access, he had a kind of business-stroke-public diary which his secretary ran, and a private diary. And through his daughter and grandson in Israel, about three years ago, I managed to get a copy of it. And I- I know about the horrors of the of the days in 1944, and the- the extreme agony in particular in this period of selecting train passengers, that he, he could hardly bear. I mean, ultimately, in personal terms it was only his daughter and one of his sisters who went on the train. Nobody else from the family. Kasztner, who became the chief negotiator, had more people, both in terms of re- relations and in terms of his home town, on the train. But I- I researched the- this area of history quite a lot and I analysed the passenger list. I have a copy of it. And the list gives a fair amount of detail about everybody on the train. So I know it was a pretty broad mix. A couple of years ago, somebody- before I say that I- I'll just mention another historical fact. Kasztner survived the war, which unfortunately my uncle didn't. I think I mentioned that he got killed by the Arrow Cross. Kasztner was on one of his international trips in conjunction with this so-called exchange and eventually survived. Settled in Israel. He was a minor government official. And in the early 50s, somebody accused him of selling art to Eichmann for- and they didn't necessarily spell out financial or financial gain or- or survival of his clique. But anyway, the accusation was made in public in Israel in leaflets, and because Kasztner was a government official the then Labour government demanded that he raise his charges on account of defamation. And it became a court case, in which Kasztner was a- a witness. The case became a kind of semi-political event, where the Israeli right used Kasztner's testimony to indict Kasztner himself in the affair as a collaborator, and therefore indict Israeli Labour as kind of collaborators with the Germans. As a consequence, after the- Kasztner was indicted by the judge, who incidentally later became a Likud Chief Justice of- of Israel. And there were strong political inclinations in the, in the trial. It- it being used for political purposes. And after the trial, before it went to appeal, and incidentally the appeal judgement went ag- went in favour of- of Kasztner. But a right-wing enthusiast shot Kasztner, and killed him. So that's where the matter rests in- in Israel. And there have been several developments in Israel since those years. But two years ago, a British journalist called Paul Bogdanor wrote a book called *Kasztner's Crime*, and somebody drew my attention to it.

And I read the book. And I- I basically- the story of the book is that the Hungarian Zionists collaborated with Eichmann and the SS, buying Zionist silence, or- or using Zionist silence as a bargaining tool, keeping news of Auschwitz, et cetera, out of circulation. And if- and therefore they are- they stand accused of killing hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews. I found the book absolutely horrifying - for a couple of reasons. One is that it, it's been written, I mean, he's not even a historian. If he was a- if the author was a historian, he would have made sure that he used references, a bibliography, read everything available, including Hungarian writings, of- of which of Hungarian writings there are only two examples that he ever quotes, both of which are in favour of his arguments, and I'll come back to the- to the main point. There have been by now dozens of Hungarian publications justifying the Zionist action. And his thesis really in the book is, that there were news reaching Hungary, through a particular source, a couple of Czech, Slovak escapees from Auschwitz, of what was going on in Auschwitz. And if that had been made public, would have altered the whole course of events in late '44.

**[3:54:36] – correct time**

*The Vrba Wetzler report.*

Yes- Wetzler- it's called *The Auschwitz Protocol*.

*Yeah.*

And, therefore him, bargaining with Eichmann put at risk the vast proportion of Hungarian Jews still- still alive. So my first major disagreement with all of that, is that it did not take in Hungary the dissemination of that report, for people to know what was going on. I- I made a couple of references to you about what my mother knew and what certain names of collection points, what even those names engendered in people. Everybody knew the moment you were taken out of your home, accommodation, whether it was out of a Yellow Star house or the ghetto or being marched on foot towards the Austrian border. Auschwitz as such did- did not figure as a specific most important destination in Hungarian mythology of the time. Bergen-Belsen or Treblinka, there were numerous- numerous other places. Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen, everybody – Dachau. These names were- were well known. So people knew. It didn't- it didn't take anything whether Kasztner may or may not say. And the second point is,

that the- like again, the little story I told you about my mother escaping, being fired at and nobody else following her example. The- the level of psychological pressure, the way people felt that they had to survive at any- any cost, any expense, meant that even the distribution of frightening news about gas chambers and all the rest of it, wouldn't have made the slightest bit of difference. And I have several other pieces of evidence where people came across particular bits of information through Zionists and others, and they did nothing. Everybody just said "As long as there's life..."-

**[Sound break]**

**[3:57:06]**

*Yes, so we were talking about Kasztner. So it is very important for you-*

So, I- yeah.

*To state that you [inaudible] with this book or with the stance of-*

And I think to make the second point, the situation in Hungary was totally different from the likes of Slovakia and Poland, where the general population was generally anti-German and sympathetic to Jews. So much so that their armies which have turned into Partisans were willing to give them arms, were willing to hide them in the forest and all the rest of it. Hungarian population has always been vastly anti-Semitic and pro-German. There wouldn't have been any place for Jews to hide. The Zionists had virtually no arms. And resistance engendered by proclaiming to everybody the dangers of the concentration camps would have been totally useless. People had given up to their fates and they were just - hopeless and helpless and inactive. And anybody who- not lived in Hungary, who not experienced those mental and- and psychological conditions should just forget about writing books about the topic.

*OK. Thank you very much. Is there- we have discussed many things. Is there something which we didn't discuss which you would like to add, or?*

I think- not that this is an official documentary, but I'm eternally grateful to Britain for letting me come here, and live here. And I'm much appreciative of the style of living and the "tolerance" is the one word that I experienced here always. And that is probably a good word to take- take forward for anybody who- who thinks of coming here or for that matter, anybody who lives anywhere else.

*So this brings me to the last question, whether you have any message based on your experiences. I know you said already some of the things you tell the children-*

Yes.

*But anything else?*

Well, the- the only other message, looking around what's happening in Europe and to some extent in America at the moment, I- I am concerned. I don't think anti-Semitism in Britain is anything approaching the scale that I experienced, and anything that I know exists in Hungary as of today. But I'm more concerned in terms of Europe, about the various right-wing parties arising and people starting to differentiate again between nations and- and all the rest of it. And when you look in America, the split between extremes rather than anybody looking for the middle of the road. And I hope that it- it will- one day in England we get a centre party rather than the two present parties diverging into more and more extremes.

*OK. Well, on that note, to say thank you very, very much for sharing your story with us. And we're going to try to look at a few photographs now.*

OK.

**[End of Interview]**

**[4:00:52]**

**[Start of photographs and documents, recorded on Zoom]**

**[0:00:00]** [From here to 0:03:00 roughly, adjustments are made to the novel circumstances of recording photos on Zoom]

*Bea: So, today is the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2020, and we are meeting Mr. Tomi Komoly to record some of the photos for an interview which we conducted some months ago, and then Covid came and we couldn't do it in person, so we're doing it digitally.*

*So, Tomi thank you first of all for agreeing to do this. And let's see whether we'll manage to share your screen and look at the photos and ask you questions about them.*

Sure. Let's go.

*OK.*

Where do you want to start?

*Start with the oldest ones.*

With the photos?

*Yeah.*

OK. I'm on the documents at the moment.

*OK.*

Let me go away from that, and we go pre-war and-

*Perfect.*

Can you see these?

*Yes, wonderful, you managed to do it. Yeah. Great.*

OK. So, what I can do- I don't have to see you in my [inaudible] I can just talk about these, right?

*Yes, but you just click on one-*

This is the very oldest one. Yeah?

*Can you make it bigger? Tomi, can you make it bigger?*

I'll- I'll make it as big as I can.

*That's good. That's good!*

I can't make it much bigger than that.

*No, it's perfect. Perfect. OK.*

OK. So that is probably the- the oldest photo in the old family store. This is my father's side. The- three generations. The man in the middle-

*Tomi, just-*

is my grandfather- Yes?

*Tomi, one second- I think it's not good because we can see now all your files which you don't want to show everyone. If you click on the photo- just click on it, it will erase the. Yeah. Just go and click on the other- Ok. Will it not come to the whole screen?*

No.

*We don't want to see- at the moment we can see all your files, you see, on the left, which we don't want to have it in the video because that's your- [Tomi clicks] Yeah. That's it! Perfect.*

Is that OK?

*Yeah, so there's nothing private now in the screen, correct?*

No.

*OK, let's start again.*

So it's only the miniatures of the photos and the-

*Perfect. That's all fine. Great. Let's do photo number 1. OK.*

**[0:03:00]**

Photo 1

So this is three generations of my father's side. The man in the middle is my grandfather, David Kohn, as he was known. And to his right is his father, Ignaz Kohn. And on the other side is Otto Kohn, who re- who's my father's brother, who later became Otto Komoly who happened to be the Chairman of the the Hungarian Zionist Federation. And he had a major role in 1944.

*And which year was this photo taken? What do you think?*

Well, he was about twenty, I guess, so this would have been about 1870- 1870.

*1870. And where, in Budapest?*

Probably. I'm not too sure where my great-grandfather lived. My grandfather lived in Budapest so it would be - probably there.

*Ok. Thank you.*

Photo 2

And then I go on. This is my grandfather and grandmother much later, of course.

*And their names, please, Tomi?*



Well, David Kohn and Emilia Klauber, she was called. She- she survived him by quite a few years. And my grandfather was one of the founding members of the International Zionist Congress in Basel.

*Fantastic.*

In [18]97. And he was the first Chairman of the Hungarian Zionist Federation, which later- much later my uncle took over.

*And what was the name of the Zionist Federation? Did it have a name?*

Well, literally that, in Hungarian. [laughs] Zionist Federation.

*Thank you. Tomi, can I ask you- there is a cursor, maybe put it away on the side because that is-*

OK. It confuses.

*Yeah. OK. Next one please.*

**[0:05:17]**

Photo 3

The next one is a picture of my father with some friends, possibly family. I don't know any of the other people. My father is- I'm not sure how it shows up on the picture. The- the man looking into the camera on the extreme left. Well, you can see the similarity anyway.

*Yeah.*

He looks like he is my father.

*And where was this- and when was this taken Tomi, roughly?*

No idea.

*Is he in Army uniform here?*

I think it possibly is. I mean, he was one of those unfortunate people who- who fought in, well, not fought, he was involved in two World Wars- in the First World War he got taken prisoners- prisoner on the Russian front and he had a very miserable time in Siberia. Came back quite severely affected by it. So, yeah? That's about it.

Now we have a whole bunch of pictures of me between the ages of two and four. I say- I really don't know all that much about the individual pictures, so can I just skip through them quickly?

*Yes, just give us the year. So this is- it says the year, doesn't it? 19-*

Well, these would all be kind of 19- I was born in '36, so these would be between '36 and '40, I guess.

Photo 4

*OK. And do you know where? Is this- is this in your garden?*

It's in our garden, yes. It was a suburb of Budapest which was independent in those days, now it's part of greater Budapest.

*What was the suburb called? What was it called?*

Kispest, which literally translates into 'Little Pest'. And that's where we lived until 1944 when we had to move into the Yellow Star house.

*And what was the address, Tomi? The address? Do you remember?*

It actually shows up later in one of the documents I'm going to show you. It's Tüzharcosok utca. Hungarians have a habit of wanting always to be very contemporary, so when it became kind of- the Germans were getting ready for war and Hungary on their side, this became the fight- fighting, "fighting with fire" street. That was the name of- name of the street. After the

war they, they've done away. It took me quite a while to find the location. It's now named after a medieval Hungarian peasant hero. But I- I- I found the house.

*OK. Next picture.*

**[0:08:31]**

Photo 5

Next picture is me and obviously I'm being let in from the garden. I guess it's my mother in the background. I skip one for a second, I'll come back to that.

Photo 6

That's me on some excursion or other. Presumably in the winter. They were always protecting my ear. Apparently I had a sensitive ear in those days.

Photo 7

We had very different ideas how to keep children healthy. And these are all kind of-

Photo 8

I don't know where that goat came from. We never had- I-I don't remember having. That's- maybe it was on a holiday somewhere.

Photo 9

Going back to the one that I skipped. This is me with my- sitting on the shoulder of my father and- and with my mother. It would be about the same- same time.

Photo 10

And this picture I found very recently. I was really pleased about it. It's the only picture I have where- with my father not being, kind of, formal. It's- we- we're on- on- on the river in a boat.

*On a holiday, or where would that be?*

Well, it would be on a holiday. Very relaxed holidays, wearing pyjama top, which is totally informal, I guess.

*Yes.*

Photo 11

And on my mother's side, my- my grandmother's sister and her- her husband, who are- no, she is not in this picture. The- the- the- Oh, yes, my- the- they both of them are. I'm in the middle of the picture and the woman's that's holding me, that's my- my grandmother's sister. And the man holding the little girl in the back there, is her husband. And they had a kind of a- a- well, it's a farm building, but they were not farmers. He was a lawyer, but we used to go every- every summer for a family holidays. And this again, next, next to me is my mother, and my father is standing behind her. And the rest are relatives on my- on my mother's and grandmother's side.

*And where is this, Tomi? Where?*

This is on the river Danube. That's why I think that the picture with my father was probably taken there. And it is nowadays in Slovakia. So the property has kind of disappeared. And they- they were one of- one the first few Hungarian Jews to be deported to one of the death camps.

*What's the name of the place? What's the name?*

Name of the village was Karva – K A R V A. [present day Kravany nad Dunajom, Slovakia] It's- it's just on the other side nowadays from Hungary. Other side of the river, and other side of the border, as it were.

Photo 12

And there are two or three more pictures of me and just maybe a slight- a year later or so. This one is with my father in the background.

Photo 13

And this one. It's- it's- I recognise that little box in the back is a- is an old fashioned well. And it's the same as- as we had in the picture with the goat. I think I recognise it. There's even a chicken in the background there. So maybe- maybe it was in- in that estate.

**[0:12:20]**

Photo 14

And that was a little later. In those days you took your children for kind of a- a set up family photos.

*What are- what are you holding in your hand there?*

It's a- it's a dog.

*Yeah.*

Yeah. It's a dog. Not a real one, needless- needless to say.

Photo 15

And then this is a- this was the family picture of- with the exception of my father, everybody here is from my mother's side. This is the husband and wife I mentioned earlier.

*What are their names? Their names please?*

Dora and Antal – Steierman. And on the other extreme is my grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side. I have separate pictures of them. And-

*And what was the occasion of this photo?*

I guess - we just all happened to be there. It's a pretty big - big house. There was enough room there for- for the whole family, I think. Or maybe we just- it was only about 100 km from Budapest.

*And is that-*

So it might have been possible for a day trip.

*Is that you on the left of the picture? Is that you, or?*

I'm the one peeking- peeking out at the- at the top, sitting on my father's shoulder.

*And your cousin? Is it your...?*

And my cousin is down here, yes.

*Yeah- yeah. I see.*

And that's a great aunt and another great aunt. And that's an aunt and her husband. He- he perished. That's about it. But I mean, from this picture, when I talk to schools I- I show this picture, because only a quarter of the people you see here actually survived.

*So tell us now, who survived in this picture?*

My mother and I, of course. My little cousin. And this lady, Ines, and my grandmother. Yeah.

*Yeah. And this picture probably should be taken maybe around 1940 or something like that.*

I guess, so, yes, just about.

**[0:15:05]**

Photo 16

And that's my father, kind of official picture just probably for some documents just before the war. So that would also be 1940. And in fact it's the same as-

Photo 17

He is shown here. My- my cousin assembled that. It's my father and his siblings. Three- three- three- [inaudible – audio problem] And of these, only these two ladies, Frida went on

Aliyah, just on- in the- in the 30s. And Dóra survived because I think I told you during our interview beforehand that there's the- that famous train known as the Kasztner train, where only some seventeen hundred- sixteen- seventeen hundred people managed to escape from Hungary. And she was the only member of the- of the family with her husband who- who- who went on that train. But she came back to Hungary afterwards.

*So your father had five other siblings?*

Yeah. Yeah.

**[0:16:43]**

And that's Ottó who- who became the Zionist President. And I've got just three more pictures pre-war.

Photo 18

One of them is half and half. This is just my grandmother - actually this picture was taken a bit later.

Photo 19

And that's my grandfather.

*And what's the name again? Could we have their names please?*

Vámos was- originally, he was also Steierman, because very interestingly, he and his brother met and married two- my grandmother and her twin sister.

OK.

So – double relatedness.

*So what was his name?*

He was also a Steierman, but he changed it to Vámos.

*Vámos?*

Photo 20

Yes, and then this is the family name you can see Kohn, David and Klauber, Emilia on the original stone. And then when the sister Dora died, her- her daughter, rather than starting a new grave, put- put her in with the- her parents and put a plaque on, which is there. And there, some- some years ago, not all that long ago, I thought that my father has no- no grave, no- no memory whatsoever. And I organised that other plaque for him to go on the family grave.

*And where is that grave? In Budapest?*

That's in Budapest. It's a very big Jewish section in- in the cemetery. Well, it's even possible it's exclusively Jewish. I think this particular part is, yes. Because there are certainly Jewish buildings and prayer house and everything else. And they keep records of- of all the graves, of course. There is also- in that cemetery there is a common memorial to- to all the Holocaust victims.

So that's the pre-war lot. Shall we go on to the...?

*Yeah.*

Immediately - during war and post war.

*Yeah.*

Let me just...there we go. Hopefully.

**[0:19:40]**

Photo 21

So, 1944, that's probably the oldest picture. That's my mother. You can tell from its condition that it has seen some hard days, as it were.



## Photo 22

And as I said to you, we lived in Kispest up till '44. The 21<sup>st</sup> of June we all had to move into Yellow Star houses in the centre of Budapest which looked a bit like that. I don't know if I can make that any bigger – not really, no.

*That's ok.*

## Photo 23

And inside, that's what it looked like, we were sharing. Because we were only allowed to have 5m sq. of accommodation. My mother and I moved- in- in this building, one of my aunts and her aunt lived together in a one-bedroom flat which was here- I think it was in that particular spot.

*And this is the building?*

This is the building, yes.

*With the photo taken today, or recently?*

I took the- I took the photo a few years ago, yeah. In those days, you didn't indulge in photography.

*No, of course not. Of course not. But it looked like that? It looks familiar?*

Yeah! Oh yeah, sure. Sure.

## Photo 24

And when I took this picture I also took this picture which doesn't look very beautiful, but it has memories for me, because when the air raids started in Budapest in the winter of '44, many times we had- we were woken in the night, middle of the night, and we had to go down into the cellar where we each had a- a mattress and some food and drink. Sometimes we had to stay down for hours. And I remember kind of trekking down these stairs. This- this wasn't the main staircase. Normally this would be used for the dustmen and the like. But it was the

nearest or just literally next- next-door to our flat entrance so that's where we would be going down. It hasn't improved- hasn't improved its appearance since the war.

*No. It looks authentic. It probably looked-*

Photo 25

It's very authentic. And I told you that we- we had a couple of further hiding places until the the- the Russians came in. And then I just want to show you when- when we eventually were trying to get together with the family, this is the bridges, or the leftover of- the bridges all looked like this, because the Germans blew them up to stop the- the Red Army advancing. And you can see this little boat here, that was the only means of- of crossing. It was a pretty hair raising experience at the time.

**[0:23:13]**

Photo 26

And where we met up with my grandmother was this place. And these three windows were the windows of the flat where we met her and eventually we moved in with her. Because she had lost her husband and we were just the two of us. So, the flat was big enough for- for three. And that's where I lived all the way until I left Hungary.

*And what's the address please?*

This is Vörösmarty utca, number 69-71.

*Veros...? Say again?*

Vörös- Vörösmarty. It's the name of a famous Hungarian poet. And one of the names I can- I can tolerate. It's not fascist and not Communist.

*That's good. OK.*

Photo 27

And for a very short time after that, when the schools began to open, I actually went to a Jewish school which still continued for another year or so, because later on the Communists shut it down. It's a- actually I realised recently it became quite a famous building for its architecture. It was a very modern and beautifully designed building. And you can see this building was built probably in the late 20s, early 30s, and the architect put the menorah into the design. And the building is- is still there, and they haven't managed to remove the religious symbol, much to the Jewish community's delight.

Photo 28

But soon after I went- I had to go the nearest school, which was only a couple of streets away from us. And that's a school photo. And you can see the date, 1951. [later points to 3<sup>rd</sup> row, standing, 6<sup>th</sup> from left]

Photo 29

And because I was a very well-achieving student I- I got the odd free summer holiday. And that picture was taken on one of- after my last year or second last year at school, I think.

*Ok, if you just go back to the last photo. Can you just go back and tell us, where are you?*

[Photo 28:] I'm here. And the only two people I have met up with is this boy here [same row, 8<sup>th</sup> from left, bottom row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from right] who is now in the US. And this one here who is in Toronto. The rest I have no idea.

*What was the name of the school?*

They were all just called after the street address. Izabella utca. Again, no- no harm in the name.

**[0:26:35]**

Photo 30

So, after this I went to- in- I couldn't get a place in- in what was the ideal high school for somebody who wanted to go to university, because by now it was Communist days and my father, having been a scrap metal merchant, I was an undesirable element. I wasn't a worker

or a worker's son. So I had to go to a school which was a semi-technical, semi-normal thing called a *Technikum*. And I studied mechanical engineering. And I went for four years to this school in one of the suburbs. And where am I? There. That's me. [second row, 4<sup>th</sup> from left and bottom row, third from left] And the one person I'm in regularly in contact with is this boy, who - guess what - he was Jewish. The other two I showed you were also- also Jewish. We were kind of- nobody spoke about being Jewish, but we naturally sought out each other. And much to my [inaudible] surprise, I managed to squeeze in from here to university because again with my background was a bit of a miracle. And at university I- well, we all had a privileged situation. We didn't have to do- to be conscripted for three years, which was the norm.

Photo 31

We just had to do a month after the first and second year. And I was – I had my one-year service in the Army and that's me, as a soldier. And then- well, I'm going to repeat this story which I'm sure you- you've got in the film.

Photo 32

[19]'56 I just want to refer to it for a quite a particular reason, because that's when I managed to leave Hungary and became a refugee. But the main motivation for me at that point, and it was a totally unexpected situation. But, after about a week or two of the- of, of the uprising, I came across this- this situation where one of the secret policemen was hanging on- on a lamppost. And I- I can read the writing, nobody else would. But I remember exactly what was pinned on to his chest there.

*What does it say?*

What it says: "*This is what's going to happen to all Communists and Jews.*" And that, to me, simply had the – had almost the instruction: Whichever way this uprising is going to go, I don't want to have any more of it. And that was it. And three weeks, three weeks later I managed to get out of the country.

Photo 33

I took this photo of my mother. I remember the circumstances very well. I just had a new camera given to me by a cousin. My first camera. And this was just after we decided that I

was leaving. And you can see that she's not- not exactly happy about it. And it was very generous of her to say that she would stay behind just and- in case I never managed. There would still be a place to come back to. Many years later she came and joined me in England.

Photo 34

And I arrived in Vienna. And that was my kind of first picture in the free world, having quite a nice time. It was just typical in those days, even when you were a refugee, with a background like I had, you had to walk around with a shirt and tie if you could possibly manage. No- no jeans and T-shirts and the like.

**[0:31:23]**

Photo 35

And when we got eventually put on a transport to- to come to England, we crossed from- from Ostend to Dover. And a friend on the boat took this picture of me. We couldn't possibly- I- it was pretty tough weather but we just had to- this was the first time we saw anything approaching an ocean. [crosstalk] had to spend the whole time on the-

*Yeah. And this is actually on the boat, Tomi?*

This is on the boat, yes, yeah. You can see the water in the background.

Photo 36

And we were heading for a midlands ex-Army- Army or Air Force camp – I'm not quite sure- in Hednesford. We lived in these barracks. We were very happy with it. They heated it properly and we had plenty of food and all the rest of it.

Photo 37

We stayed there until I found out that there were some Jewish organisations in London that would help us until our future arrangements had been completed. And at that point I left. And in fact there was a thing called- I think it was called The Jewish Refugees Committee - in Tottenham Court Road. And they helped me to find lodgings and gave me some clothing and the like. And I lived in Dollis Hill for a- a couple of, maybe three months, maybe even a bit longer. I think that- that trench coat was a- a kind gift of the Jewish Refugees Committee. It

was the first new item of clothing I had; everything else was second-hand up till then. But I still have my shirt and tie, if I look-

*Yeah.*

So all very proper. And- ok, so that was what I called the transitional period before I became an Englishman.

*Yeah.*

And let me go now to the last lot. And there we go- just a few pictures.

Photo 38

I got a place in Glasgow at what was called the Royal College of Science and Technology studying- continued studying engineering. And I only realised recently that when I did my thesis, I- I was offered the possibility of doing work on a computer. And this computer, made by English Electric - which is proudly displayed there - was one of the first four computers in the whole of Britain. So I was certainly in the forefront of technology. You can see the size of it. All that it did would now be a fraction of my smartphone. But that was a very interesting experience.

**[0:34:48]**

Photo 39

And the next year met up for the very first time with my uncle that I had made reference to who has been very kindly trying to look after me with little pocked money and things. I mean, we met in Cologne. And he was- in his spare time he was a very keen artist. And he would always go and sketch and paint and I would go with him everywhere. This is my photography and his artistry meeting up- he's painting the- the Cologne Cathedral.

*And tell me his name again, Tomi?*

George- George Vámos. He's carrying the same-

*Nice photo. You know, I'm from Cologne. I'm from Cologne.*

Are you? Ah well, so you recognise it.

*I recognise the photo. I'm of course from the other side. He's on the right side so the Dome-  
I'm from the other side of the river.*

Well, that's, that's the nice part of it, but this is the place where you get the view.

*The best view, with the bridge. With the trains- the trains coming into the railway station on  
the right.*

Correct. So I did-

*And where did he live, Tomi? Where did he live?*

He lived in Kenya, in Nairobi. But every, every summer he would come to Europe and we would meet up every year from then on.

*And was he a successful painter?*

Pardon?

*And was he a successful painter? Or was it a hobby?*

No, no. He was a very successful architect.

*Architect.*

But painting was his- his hobby and relaxation.

*OK.*

**[0:36:35]**

Photo 40

So after three years at Glasgow I went to do a Masters' course in Birmingham. And that was my graduation in Birmingham with a friend I made, a Greek boy.

Photo 41

And then I went for three years to Imperial College in London, where I met my wife. And that was the next stage.

*[inaud]*

This is the first- this is the second time I found myself in a synagogue. First time was a week earlier when I was called up and I began to learn about my own religion, so to speak.

*Which synagogue? Where was it?*

This was the Chapel Lane- I think it's- no, Chapeltown. Chapeltown *Chassidisch* Synagogue in- in Leeds. It was Hasidic in name. In reality it was really closer to Modern Orthodox than anything else.

*And which year?*

1966. '66. And that's Gill and me.

Photo 42

And the next step of course, I think it was four years later- no. This is not four years later. Four years later we had Gabriella. And then another eight years later we had Tanya. And by this time we moved to Wilmslow where we now live. And this is in the park just behind our house.

Photo 43

And that's just me with the two girls. And then of course normal family life and schooling and all the rest of it.



Photo 44

And the next step in family progression: Gabriella getting married. That's me with her.

Photo 45

And then the next family step, Tanya, the younger girl, getting married. That was- Gabriella's wedding was here. This was in Sydney followed by a celebration back here for friends.

Photo 46

And then a few years elapsed. And having been engaged fairly regularly at a kind of ordinary level, if you want to call it, in- in religious life - like going to shul every couple of weeks, and the like - in 1960- when was it? I have to work out the- the year. In sixty- 2001, that's right. It occurred to me that what I was missing in my Judaism because of the war and Communism, I never had a Bar Mitzvah. So I asked our rabbi if I could have one, five times thirteen being sixty-five. And we had family from literally all over the world. And friends- local friends and European friends and American friends and all sorts. And this is me saying Kiddush at the gathering at home. The little tag you can see on my lapel we created, because it was such an international gathering, we wanted to show everybody what language the bearer can speak so that we could all communicate in the best possible way.

Photo 47

So, almost finally. This is Gabriella and Tanya maybe four, five years ago. Something like that.

Photo 48

And this is me a couple of years ago, just at- I think it's one of the school talks I'm giving about my Holocaust experiences. I think it is in Whitehaven in Cumbria.

*With a school? In a school?*

Yeah. Yeah. You can see the background, there are kids in the background.

**[0:41:18]**

*Thank you Tomi.*

So that's all the pictures.

*Thank you so much.*

Do you want to go to the documents?

*Yes. Let's go to documents.*

#### Document 1

Those are in no particular order. Oh, when I was at Imperial College in London I began to wake up to the possibilities of University life. And I- I then had my misspent youth playing bridge and basketball. And this is showing- that's me named there - Winners of the University Championships.

#### Photo 49

We're jumping quite a lot. This is another photo, black and white, of the Jewish school in Budapest. You can still see the menorah. You can see the lettering here: Budapest Israelite Community. Tablets- tablets of stone.

*And what is the building today?*

It is now a teacher training college - for the government.

#### Document 2

When my- I mentioned to you that my father was a prisoner of war in the First World War and obviously there was a talented artist who decided to do a cartoon of him.

#### Photo 50

This one I just mentioned- Imperial College. I also played in a basketball team and that won the Universities Championship.

#### Photo 51

This one is going back to 1944. The Arrow Cross, this is the symbol of the Hungarian Nazi Party. And what the graffiti says is “Beat up the Jews”.

### Document 3

This is the list of Master of Science graduates in Birmingham. And it’s me there. Thomas John Komoly - 1961. December. That’s when the photograph was taken.

**[0:43:52]**

### Photo 52

I found this on Google of all places. Border crossing in 1956. That’s – that’s how I went across. Interesting experience.

Yeah, interesting photo – I saw that. Yeah.

### Document 4

This is the the winner’s tankard from the Bridge Competition, 1965.

### Photo 53

This is Budapest after the war, 1945. This is what we found when we got back. And if you look at this particular building, I’ll show you the modern photo that I took of where we lived for ten years. But this window you see here is exactly how one of those- one of our windows looked. It took a while to get to the point where we managed to keep the rain and the wind out.

### Photo 54

This is going- when would it be, 1962- I should really know the date. When Churchill died, a friend of mine and I felt that we really wanted to pay our respects. And we- people in the rotten weather we were all queuing across the river to go and walk past past his coffin. In Westminster. I mean, you can see the- the queue is going away from Westminster, and then it goes to the South Bank and back on the other side. It was hours before we- we got there. But I really- that is why I was so upset not so long ago when somebody wanted to pull down Churchill’s statue in the present political upheaval.

I've got some photos mixed in here for some-

*Yeah. Skip the photos. Skip the photos I think.*

Sorry. Let me just see. OK, well I just- I had- I had the documents segregated at one point.

Yeah, here we go- sorry. My mistake. OK. Documents only.

**[0:46:27]**

Document 5

This is my thesis in Glasgow. Cover page.

Document 6

This is my naturalisation certificate. I had to- I had to spend five years and get four sponsors.

*And when did you get this- when did you get it, Tomi?*

This is 1952. Should be, because I applied at the first opportunity.

'62? '62?

'62, yes.

1962.

Has to be. There's a letter somewhere.

Document 7

I inherited my grandmother's recipe books. Quite a lot. And I- I was particularly interested in desserts. And I decided to- I wanted some commemoration to her. And I thought this was an ideal way of doing it. I translated all the recipes. Fifty, fifty-five of them. Com- and combined it with description of not only the recipe but the whole process and progress photos. I made every one of them at home.

*Fantastic. When did you publish it?*

This is now about six or seven years old.

*Ok, so 2014, '15.*

What's also nice, I managed to put in little stories from the days when I lived with her in Budapest back in the 50s. So it's really a reference to our, to our shared past as well.

*And what's your favourite recipe in there?*

My favourite recipe is the very first one. And I explain in the book why. Because it's- to anybody else it's probably not the the most exiting or the most significant. It's called *Linzertorte* which is not- not a cake at all. It's a- well, it's a bake.

*Yeah.*

And when I first made it for my older daughter she loved it. And it became her favourite. If she ever asked me to make something, that had to be it. And my second daughter took to it likewise. And when the grandchildren started coming along, every one of them. It's- it's *the* family dish.

*OK.*

So I decided it had to go on the front page.

*OK.*

**[0:49:20]**

Document 8

And we got on to- this is- in Hungarian schools you have a kind of yearbook, where all your results go half, half term and end of year go in. And what really is significant for some in this one is that they always contained the religion. And you can see IZR - Israelite. This was the

polite way of naming a Jew. Nobody ever called you Israelite. They always called you a Jew.

#### Document 9

This is when I- towards the tail end of my working career I specialised in design and construction of laboratories. And together with a few colleagues who used to assist me we put together this book. And the other- the other boys put in about electrical design and one or two other specialities. But this is my kind of - life. A record of my, not a record, but the achievement of my technical life, engineering life.

#### Document 10

And this is the Home Office certifying that I have become a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies. And a British subject. And it is signed, *I am, Sir, Your obedient servant*. This is in February '63.

#### Document 11

This is a rather sad document. In 1945, when you were missing a- a friend or a relative through the Holocaust, you could go through the International Red Cross and put in a search, and this is what my mother filled in looking for my father. And unfortunately there was no- no response whatsoever.

#### Document 12

And this is- really relates more or less the same thing. My, my uncle kept a personal diary. The the one in the Zionist Federation. And he had some connection to- to the neutral embassies in Budapest. And also to some- because he, in the First World War he- he was an officer. He had some links to the Hungarian government as well. And when my father was taken away, my mother went to see him, asking for- for some help. And he is recording here. He says, Alfred that he- he is at the Dohány Street Synagogue. And "I'm trying to get some certificates to release him" - but he didn't- he didn't succeed unfortunately.

**[0:52:38]**

#### Document 13

That's another British government letter. Just certifying - I forget now why I- I asked for it - that I arrived in the United Kingdom on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1957. So this is showing my true origins as a British citizen.

Document 14

And this is an envelope from a letter that my father wrote to my mother, when she was pregnant with me. Showing the heading of- of his metal yard where he traded.

Document 15

And this is a newspaper cutting, about the engagement of my father- father and mother.

Document 16

And this is their *Ketubah*.

Document 17

And finally, a strange piece of document. Because my father had been put into the forced labour battalion, but nonetheless he counted as a- an Army person. My mother was issued with this certificate that entitled her to a small war- allocation, a small amount of money. That's about it. That's the collection.

*Tomi, did you ever- did you put your father's name to the international tracing service?*

Did I? You mean recently, or? No – no. I have very little doubt, I mean. I vaguely remember I- I told you in the filmed interview, that from the labour unit, he came home for a two- two or three day leave. But in- after a day it was the Arrow Cross people who suddenly came and took him away. And anybody who disappeared with them- it was pretty unlikely that he survived. They probably shot him or pushed him in the river or something like that. So it- it was pretty pointless looking for him. Certainly pointless now.

*OK. OK.*

*OK. Wonderful Tomi. I think this is the first time we've been doing it like this and I have to say it's amazing that technology allows us to- to do it. And I can see the pictures very, very clearly, and hear you and you can talk about it. This may be pioneering today. But it depends*

*very much on the technical abilities on your- on the other side. So well done, this is great. Really fantastic. So, if you- do you want to stop screen sharing for a second then we can come out to normal view?*

**[0:55:55]**

Yeah. There we go.

*Perfect. That's great. OK. Tomi is there anything else you would like to add? I apologise you had to wait for this for so long. And what I'm going to do now is, I will add this to your interview and make it into one folder, and I can share it with you. That's the easiest. I'll share you a link.*

How, I mean, as a matter of interest, is this an add-on, or are you going to intermingle it with the conversation?

*No, it's an add-on. It's an add-on. Because we are an archive, it is- you will get exactly what we filmed. And this is just another way of doing it. So you will get exactly what we did today, and what we did some months ago.*

Excellent. Tell me how does the AJR Archive relate to- what is his name now? Excuse me for a second. The American guy who's doing the same?

*Shoah Foundation? Spielberg?*

Yeah, Spielberg. Are you sharing or- or is it in parallel or?

*So first of all let me switch the recording off and I tell you afterwards.*

*So anyway, I'll say thank you again and we'll continue our discussion in a second.*

**[End of photographs and documents]**

**[0:57:11]**