

**IMPORTANT**

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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Forename:</b>	Marion
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Female
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**REFUGEE VOICES:  
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

**INTERVIEW: 122**

**NAME: MARION GERVER**

**DATE: 30 MAY 2006**

**LOCATION: LONDON**

**INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE**

**TAPE 1**

AG: I'm interviewing Mrs Marion Gerver on the 30 May 2006 in London. My name is Anthony Grenville. First of all, Mrs Gerver, I just like to say thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us for the AJR Project. Could I start by asking you to state your full name at birth, please?

MG: Yes. Marion Irene Goldschmidt.

AG: And where were you born?

MG: In Berlin.

AG: And what was the date of your birth?

MG: 7 January 1912.

AG: Thank you very much. I just like to ask you a bit about the family background you were born into. Could you tell me a little about your father? What was his name?

MG: My father was Doctor Robert Goldschmidt and he was a specialist for internal diseases in Berlin.

AG: Did he work at a hospital?

MG: He had his own clinic.

AG: In what part of Berlin was this?

MG: Wilmersdorf.

AG: Right, so his clinic was there. And did you live in Wilmersdorf?

MG: Yes, around the corner practically.

AG: Had he been born in Berlin?

MG: No, he was born in Koblenz am Rhein.

AG: Oh, how is that? Did the family come from that area?

MG: My grandmother was actually born in Brussels, she was Belgian. They moved to Koblenz at the time and that's where he was born.

AG: So on your father's side, part of the family was Belgian. And the other half, were they-

MG: Well, he had one brother who lived in London and he had two brothers in Brussels, they were bankers. And he had two sisters and they lived in Berlin. It was all mixed. So we spent the holiday always in Ostend, so that the whole family could meet.

**Tape 1: 3 minutes 23 seconds**

AG: When was he born?

MG: Yes, well, just a moment - he died at the age of 92. And he married in 1908, so I have to work it out now.

AG: Do you remember the year he died? But it doesn't matter if you can't.

MG: I should have worked it out before.

AG: Well, that's alright. I could have told you that I was going to ask. It doesn't matter.

MG: He was over 90. He died of cancer in his bed. It wasn't in hospital. My mother wanted him to die at home.

AG: Would that have been in Berlin?

MG: That was here, in Finchley.

AG: Of course. And how come that he went to Berlin? Did he study medicine in Berlin?

MG: Yes, he studied in Berlin.

AG: And was he successful as a doctor?

MG: Very. I don't think he ever had a wrong diagnosis. He also had quite a few patients in England.

AG: Was he attached to a hospital as well or did he just have a-

MG: No, he had a private clinic.

AG: I'm not quite sure what internal diseases means.

MG: Magen und Darm.

AG: Oh I see, that translates as 'stomach', and 'Darm' is 'intestines'. And what sort of a man was he, could you describe him?

MG: Well, he was a very good sportsman. And he travelled the world before he got married. After he married, he started his private practice. And he worked together with two surgeons. The one surgeon, he really was a very well-known surgeon but he didn't listen to him when he tested somebody whether he was ready for an operation. The surgeon said it was alright and he said he won't be able-, we have to postpone it, and that was the top surgeon in Berlin. And the patient died during the operation. And then my father changed the surgeon, obviously. But it was the top surgeon. And they had an argument and he said, 'No, he's perfectly alright. He will survive.' Well, he didn't.

AG: Oh dear. Were these surgeons that your father worked with also Jewish?

MG: One was Jewish and one was not.

AG: And what about the patients, were they also mixed or where they-

**Tape 1: 7 minutes 49 seconds**

MG: All mixed. This sort of Jewishness didn't come into our mind. I mean we were Jewish, but we were completely assimilated.

AG: Did your parents move in Jewish and non-Jewish circles?

MG: Probably, yes. My grandparents were in very exclusive clubs. He was a Preussischer Kommerzienrat.

AG: A Prussian - 'Kommerzienrat' one can't translate.

MG: Actually, the only-, when my grandmother died, the only gentile who attended it was General von Kuhl. Gentiles were not allowed to attend a Jewish service, he was the only one. The family was practically out of Germany, most of them.

AG: So that was after 1933?

MG: Yes.

AG: Could you tell me a little bit about this grandfather who was a Kommerzienrat?

MG: Well, he was a very well-known textiles merchant. But he was also in the Jewish community very well-known because he attended, as one can say, Jewish and really completely mixed-. Also his hobbies were completely mixed, he was a keen huntsman. And people from the government were invited, as I say, absolutely, one never spoke about Jews or gentiles. It didn't exist.

AG: I never asked you what his name was?

MG: Gerson, Simon.

**Tape 1: 10 minutes 52 seconds**

AG: Did he come from a fairly established old Berlin Jewish family?

MG: I don't know very much about my grandfather. But my grandmother's family, they were the bankers of Krupp in Essen. And I visited them. But they left then. One of them went to America with a patent of some sort. And he was an industrialist then in New York. And he collected impressionists, it cost very little at that time. And I went there, to Essen, before I left for South Africa and they really lived in style.

AG: Could you describe it a little?

MG: Yes. They had a fantastic home, a Chinese sort of garden, and they had footmen. And when I met them afterwards once in America, the one said to me, 'You know, we live very well, but the way our parents lived was still so different, we can hardly imagine.' So they lived in style. But they moved to America; they were three in the family of my grandmother. I've got a picture there with the whole family.

AG: We will take a picture of that after the interview.

**Tape 1: 13 minutes 30 seconds**

MG: All in all, it was an absolutely incredible life.

AG: Did you ever go and stay with them before this time you mentioned, before you were leaving for South Africa?

MG: Before I went to Essen. And one of the sons of Krupp was supposed to learn bank management. And they said it wouldn't be a good-, at that time, it was already 1935, so they said it wasn't a good idea.

AG: What was he supposed to learn?

MG: The banking. But they apparently prepared already to leave at the time. It was quite an experience. I remember the-, on 30 January 1933 was the dance of the press [Presseball, AB] and it was the day when Hitler got into-, was chosen to become the head of the government, and it was like a 'morgue fair', because the press was mainly in Jewish hands. I think it was the 30 January 1933, if I'm not mistaken.

AG: Do you remember the house at all that they lived in in Essen? Can you describe it a little?

MG: Well, it was a huge house, I don't remember how many rooms there were. With a huge park and then this sort of Chinese garden. You could sit in there and they had windows which went right down to the end. It was their own phantasy, their own design. It was like any of these big houses here. It was incredible really.

**Tape 1: 17 minutes 30 seconds**

AG: I ought to ask you a bit about your mother now. What was her name?

MG: Margot.

AG: And what was her maiden name?

MG: Salomon.

AG: Could you tell me a little bit about her?

MG: Yes. My mother was really a rather shy woman. She was pretty strict with us. I had two brothers and one died very young, of cancer of the bones, he was 45. And the other one was Lieutenant Colonel in the British Army here.

AG: I'd better ask you, for the record, what their names were. The oldest first, what was his name?

MG: Werner.

AG: And when was he born, was he older or younger than you?

MG: He was three years older.

AG: So this would be 1910.

MG: 1910, yes.

AG: And was this the one who died young or was that the one who-

MG: That was the one who died at the age of 45.

AG: And the other brother – what was his name?

MG: Herbert Frederick. He was five years younger than I.

AG: So that's 1917.

MG: Yes. I had an uncle here who was a grape merchant and he went out with a friend of-. He went to this sanatorium to visit a friend of mine. And then we bought the paper one day and they said that they took the passports away of the Jews in Breslau. And then my mother thought it would be a good idea ... I had a friend who was going to England. She was German champion in javelin-throwing in 1928. She was my age and he was five years younger. And she took him to England and he went to school in Eton Avenue.

**Tape 1: 20 minutes 15 seconds**

AG: What school was that?

MG: I don't know what kind of school, but my uncle was looking after him.

AG: For the record I should say that the block of flats where we are conducting this interview is actually in Eton Avenue in London NW3.

MG: Yes. And then he went to school, finished school, and went into textile business. And then came the war and he joined the army.

AG: He became a Lieutenant Colonel.

MG: He ended up a Lieutenant Colonel. He was stationed somewhere in Suez for a while. But the strange thing is, they didn't give him a British passport. He was a Lieutenant Colonel and they didn't give him a British passport. If he would have been caught by the Germans he was still German.

AG: Well, I'll ask you about him later because I'd like to keep things in chronological order and would just like to ask you about your mother. You were saying that she was quite a shy person, but strict with-

MG: -with us, yes. She really loved the youngest one, he was very good-looking, the most-

AG: How did she meet your father?

MG: She was, yes, in the clinic where my father was and she met him there and she fell in love with him. And then the second oldest sister - they wanted to get rid of my mother. Then they stayed outside the clinic. And then he was coming to visit us, anyhow, it worked. So they eventually got married.

AG: What sort of family did she come from, your mother? Was she from Berlin as well?

MG: My mother?

AG: Oh, so that was the family - I understand, sorry. And they got married, did you say in 1908?

MG: 1908, yes.

AG: Did your father get called up in the First World War?

**Tape 1: 23 minutes 24 seconds**

MG: Yes, and he actually got even the Iron Cross. He was a very good sportsman and he got caught. He was on a horse and two bullet wounds-. one went into him and the other one went into the horse. And he was his whole life never without pain. And he said if he wouldn't be a doctor he would run from one doctor to the other. And yet he reached the age of 92.

AG: Where was he wounded, do you know?

MG: Yes, in the bowels.

AG: I meant which front. Was this in France or in Russia?

MG: It was in France.



AG: Oh, so he wasn't facing the British. This would have been rather ironic then if his son was to become a British Lieutenant Colonel in the next war.

MG: He really was very difficult for my mother because he was nearly an invalid all the time. But what was so amazing, he never complained. And his life changed physically, too, because of the pain. And it was very difficult for her to have an invalid, a young woman and an invalid for a husband.

AG: If he was wounded like that I assumed he was in the Medical Corps, but he wasn't?

MG: He was in the Medical Corps and he was in the frontline on a horse. As I say, he got the Iron Cross, which I threw away.

AG: Did you?

MG: Yes.

AG: When did you do that?

MG: Ronny has actually the notes still-. Under Hitler he got some notes of what he did. As I say, Ronny did, I didn't look after it.

AG: Yes, he would have got some privileges.

MG: Yes.

AG: But when did you throw the Iron Cross away, do you remember?

**Tape 1: 26 minutes 22 seconds**

MG: When I cleared out Beechwood Avenue.

AG: I see, so that was long after you came to England.

MG: Yes.

AG: And when your father came back from the war and your parents settled down together in Berlin, what sort of life did they lead?

MG: They lived practically a very strange life. He was an excellent doctor. And as I say, he also had to go to England to his patients. And he was very musical; my mother wasn't very musical. They had very little in common. My father had a terrific sense of humour, and my mother none at all. It was a very strange marriage because they didn't have the same interests. The marriage was alright, but it was difficult for my mother as well. He enjoyed different-. He was a very good linguist and very musical and he liked the game of skat. Twice a week when he didn't work he played cards. My mother played mah-jong. I always wondered, they had very little in common.

AG: You said he came to England to treat patients as well?

MG: Yes.

AG: He was an international-

MG: He was very good, as I say, not one wrong diagnosis.

AG: Oh, of course there were family members in England.

MG: Only he had a brother in England and we always met in Ostend in the summer, the whole family. It was rather boring for us, because every year the same thing. I don't know how he got the patients, but he was recommended by somebody, because my uncle had friends here and they were happy when they came to Berlin and they liked him and they kept him as their doctor. But all in all, it was, yes, the family was really quite amazing. Because my father, my brother moved after the World War to South America, to Buenos Aires. And my father, at the age of 86, learnt fluent Spanish, on his own! And my father did the cooking, my mother couldn't cook.

AG: I'm surprised he had the time.

MG: No, here.

AG: Oh, here, I see.

**Tape 1: 30 minutes 30 seconds**

MG: When they emigrated, my father never wanted to emigrate. He said, 'Hitler won't last long.' Slight mistake! And so he could do anything, whether it was work with an electrician or whatever, he could do anything. But my mother never learnt cooking.

AG: Did you have a cook in Berlin?

MG: We had a butler and we had a cook and a maid and somebody for us.

AG: A sort of nanny.

MG: Nanny.

AG: Was that a German-

MG: We had four people employed. We had a large flat. For instance, in Berlin you very rarely had a house; you lived in apartments. We had an eleven-room apartment.

AG: Eleven?

MG: Yes, but only two baths really. Didn't exist.

AG: Do you remember the address?

MG: Yes. But I didn't go there when I went to Berlin, it's all new. I know the address.

AG: Could you tell us, just for the tape?

MG: Spichernstraße 17/18.

AG: Spichern? I don't know that.

MG: You know Nürnberger Platz?

AG: Yes.

MG: Well, it was practically around the corner.

AG: Could you describe what the flat was like in furnishings and pictures?

MG: Well, yes, these flats were huge, really. There were one dining room, two lounges, a study, and in the passage we had something for the exercise, to do *turnen*, gymnastics. And the dining rooms in Berlin were always built the way that you go to the back to the bedrooms. The dining room was also really the passage to the back. They were very strangely built, but that was in Berlin, I don't know whether in other towns it was like that.

AG: Did your parents entertain a lot? Did they have people around?

**Tape 1: 34 minutes 17 seconds**

MG: Two or three big parties a year that was it. My father, as I said, he had the practice also from his home. He had to rest for an hour after lunch. He had lunch at home. And the practice, there were three rooms at the front for his practice: the waiting room and the consulting room and where you, what do you call it, see the patients. And the clinic was around the corner. So he had a lot of the *Praxis* at home. And he travelled. The doctors in Germany, you have to visit them at night if they call you, which is no fun.

AG: And did they follow any Jewish practice or observance?

MG: My father didn't believe in anything. But my mother believed to be religious. But actually my grandfather was a keen huntsman, so when we got the pheasants and whatever, she took the bacon out of hers, not to eat it. We didn't have a kosher household. She also liked lobster. When my parents married, it was a big affair and the rabbi ate caviar and my grandfather said to him, 'I think you think you're eating black rice!' So we were, he was actually also, we were reformed.

AG: I was going to ask you, which synagogue-

MG: Lützowstraße, it was Dr Weiss, Dr Baeck.

**Tape 1: 37 minutes 49 seconds**

AG: Leo Baeck?

MG: Yes, he was very friendly actually with Leo Baeck. And as I say, he had completely mixed, Jewish and gentiles... It was simply, the Jews in Berlin, certainly, were assimilated.

AG: Did Dr Leo Baeck actually officiate at your father and mother's wedding, do you know?

MG: I don't really know who it was. Ronny has some records, because he was so interested in the family. He's got the menu for the wedding, which certainly wasn't kosher.

AG: Yes, I see. Did you ever meet Leo Baeck yourself?

MG: Once I met him.

AG: What impression did you have of him, do you remember?

MG: He seemed more like a philosopher than a rabbi.

AG: You didn't see him in this country as he came here?

MG: No. I know the Leo Baeck House in the suburb.

AG: Moving on to yourself-

MG: Well, I went to South Africa-

AG: Well, before I'd like to do a little bit about your time in Berlin. Where did you go to school?

MG: I went to a private school.

AG: What was it called, do you remember the name?

**Tape 1: 40 minutes 6 seconds**

MG: Yes, Lessler-Schule. Actually, I visited them in New York. And I left when I was 16.

AG: So you went to this school all through your education?

MG: Oh yes.

AG: I don't know the name. Could you spell it for us, just for the tape?

MG: Lessler.

AG: I've never heard of it. Was that local?

MG: That was a local school, yes. And then I went to, after school, I went to Lausanne for a year.

AG: Was that a finishing school in Lausanne, or...?

MG: Yes, it was a finishing-. And then I went for a year to England.

AG: Where did you come to in England?

MG: I stayed at Streatham Hill.

AG: Oh, how exciting! Where did you go in England, what institution?

MG: It was also all private schools.

AG: Was that to improve your English?

MG: Yes.

AG: So what year would this have been when you came to England?

MG: Well, I was 16 when I left school, then I went to Lausanne. And then I went to England.

AG: Going back to your German school for a minute, what sort of girls went to this Lessler-Schule?

MG: All mixed.

AG: Did you have particular friends there?

MG: Yes, I had a friend, she just died. I went for 30 years, because I can't see well, not now, but we went every year to Switzerland.

AG: Ah, yes, I think your son has told me. Could you tell us for the tape where you met in Switzerland, which town?

MG: Well, she lived in New York and I lived here. She came to me for a while and then we went to Switzerland together.

AG: Where did you go in Switzerland?

MG: Well, first I went to the Engadin. But then all of a sudden I couldn't sleep anymore, so for the last 30 years I went to Flims which is south of Miethersheim [?]

AG: And this friend of yours, she was presumably Jewish as well?

MG: Yes.

**Tape 1: 43 minutes 13 seconds**

AG: Did you have non-Jewish-

MG: She was half Jewish. Her father was an actor and he was gentile, the mother was Jewish.

AG: What was her name?

MG: Inge Klein.

AG: Was that her married name or her-

MG: No, that was her maiden name.

AG: Where did her father act, was he with-

MG: I never met him. He died fairly young.

AG: Did you also have friends amongst the non-Jewish girls?

MG: Oh yes, I had.

AG: Was there any sort of, did you encounter any anti-Semitism?

MG: No, on the contrary. The one who was an actress actually, she was very anti-Nazi. She was dark. And when the Nazis arrived she once put her foot down and fell. She was taken to the police and they thought she was Jewish but she wasn't Jewish. They let her go.

AG: And were you particularly good at any subject at school? Did you excel in anything?

MG: No, I was average.

AG: What about the teachers?

MG: Oh, they were quite good. The teachers gave a good education as such.

AG: Are there any that you remember particularly?

MG: Yes. Not that I'm very good in mathematics, but she was very good, the teacher.

AG: Were the teachers mainly Jewish or non-Jewish?

MG: Half and half.

AG: I suppose this school...

MG: You know, as I say, this Jewish or non-Jewish, in Berlin at least, one really didn't worry. There was complete assimilation.

AG: What about your brothers, where were they educated?

MG: Well, the one in Werner-Siemens-Gymnasium. And the other one was half educated here.

**Tape 1: 46 minutes 24 seconds**

AG: Of course, yes, 1917. Did your older brother start studying in-

MG: No, he didn't study.

AG: So did he go into the-

MG: He did always something else. He wasn't steady in whatever he did. He loved-, he had enthusiasm, also in South Africa, he couldn't keep money. Whenever he had money, it had to be spent. When we turned over with the car, he said, 'That's real South Africa!' But when he got engaged, oh yes, when I arrived in South Africa, I think I had 45 Marks in Cape Town. So he fetched me and he said, 'How much money have you got?' I said, '45 Marks, that's all.' He said, 'What? So much?' Then he was engaged and then we had to go to a farm somewhere. 'You have to sleep with my future wife.' And I said, 'But I haven't got a job yet!' He said, 'Never mind, never mind.' And I warned her, I said, 'He's very easy, he's very enthusiastic, but you will always have to work.' So it was easy for me to get a job in Port Elisabeth.

AG: We'll come on to South Africa a bit later. If I may I just like to wrap up the German part of it. Well actually, not too much the German, you just started telling me a little about coming to England-

MG: Yes, I was a year in England.

AG: That must have been about 1930, something like that?

MG: Yes, I was 18 years old.

AG: What were your impressions of England?

MG: Oh, I liked it. I liked London. I liked the arts.

**Tape 1: 49 minutes 14 seconds**

AG: Oh, plenty of that in Berlin, my goodness, in the Twenties!

MG: Oh yes. And the Pergamon Museum, they've got it rebuilt as it was before, the Pergamon Museum.

AG: Did you like the English?

MG: Yes.

AG: Who did you stay with? Did you stay with a family?

MG: With a family.

AG: What sort of family were they?

MG: A sort of boarding house. With other-, actually from Berlin who came to England for a year.

AG: Did you find the English friendly to Germans? They must have thought of you as German?

MG: Oh, very friendly.

AG: And what did you do, what did you get up to? How did you spend the time when you were in England?

MG: Actually as I say, I like the arts. I spent a lot of time in the museums. I also went to lectures.

AG: Did you make any particular friends at that time?

MG: Well, actually we were all very close, the ones who came from Berlin. Yes, I went to some parties here which were rather strange.

AG: How?

MG: It had ladies upstairs, this sort of thing. Doesn't exist anymore

AG: You found the English a bit-

MG: Stiff.

AG: Antiquated. I suppose this was quite an elevated level of English society?

MG: Yes, there were two people in Berlin who knew quite a few people in London, so-.

AG: And you had family here?

MG: I had family as well.

AG: Did you see them?

MG: Yes. Now, my uncle for instance, he married a gentile here, a Belgian. It was very funny: my uncle went on holidays with some girlfriend of his and he came back and it didn't please his mother and she said to him, 'You are engaged now.' And she chose the bride. It wasn't a success. A Belgian.

AG: And what did your uncle do?

MG: Grain merchant.

AG: So were they based in the City?

MG: In the City, yes.

**Tape 1: 52 minutes 38 seconds**

AG: What was his name, your uncle?

MG: Carl Goldsmith.

AG: Ah, so he anglicised it to Goldsmith. And was he successful?



MG: He was successful. He really worked up to the age of 95, but he couldn't see anymore. But the marriage wasn't good and he preferred working to spending his time at home.

AG: Where did they live, do you remember?

MG: Opposite us, in Finchley.

AG: So that was Beechwood Avenue?

MG: Beechwood Avenue. They had a big house, because they had a double stand. Now there is another house built. I went to Beechwood Avenue once and there is another house built. And they had water, a pool with fish, a pond, on the other stand. It was a large house, but it changed.

AG: So after your time in England, you went back to Berlin?

MG: Yes.

AG: That would have been 1930/31. Did you notice any change in the atmosphere in Germany?

MG: Well, first we had the inflation in 1922/24. And then the depression started. The unemployment started about 1930, and the government wasn't very sound, Brüning, Stresemann.

AG: Did you see any unemployed, were you aware of-

MG: Yes, the unemployment really started already. But it was phantastic between 1924 and 1929 that was the height of living here in Berlin, it couldn't have been nicer.

**Tape 1: 56 minutes 2 seconds**

AG: What did you particularly like about it?

MG: Well, the theatre was good. The whole life was absolutely-. The arts, the theatre, the concerts, I mean there was so much.

AG: I will have to ask you about that on the next tape, because we are going to have a short break now, the tape is coming to an end.

**Tape 1: 56 minutes 40 seconds**

**TAPE 2**

AG: Marion Gerver, Tape 2.

You were just saying that the arts and the theatre had reached a sort of high point in Berlin in the 1920s.

MG: Yes.

AG: Do you have any particular memories of theatres or concerts that you went to?

MG: I saw Yehudi Menuhin I think at the age of ten.

AG: Menuhin?

MG: Yes.

AG: Do you remember where?

MG: Oh yes, at the Philharmonic, it's especially for concerts. And he was with his father, a huge success obviously.

AG: Do you remember what he played?

MG: No, I can't.

AG: Did you see any of the great conductors at the time?

MG: Furtwängler. Yes, it was the height of really musical life, theatre life, Reinhardt. Unfortunately I can't remember anymore of the time. But the theatre was outstanding under Reinhardt and Barnowsky. It was a town alive. And then slowly it was, but as I say, between the-, slowly the politicians weren't very good anymore and it was declining slowly. But the height was unbelievable.

**Tape 2: 3 minutes 9 seconds**

AG: Did you see things like for example the *Dreigroschenoper*, do you remember this?

MG: Yes. We actually produced it in South Africa, as amateurs.

AG: That would have been rather unusual in South Africa, very avant-garde for South Africa!

MG: It was the height really of cultural life.

AG: You as a, what we now call a teenager, were you aware of that?

MG: Oh yes. Whoever came to Berlin... I mean we had the terrible inflation at this time, between 1922 and 1924. My father got paid and we had to go down because five minutes later the value had gone down!

AG: You had to spend the money-

MG: -right away! I saw a very funny cartoon: somebody, there was a big basket full of money and they threw the money out and took the basket away.

AG: They stole the basket, but not the money?

MG: Because the money was valueless. That was the height and then it dropped again. What was the politics? Nobody realised that we were really badly guided in politics.

AG: When did you first become aware of the extremists, the Nazis?

MG: Well, he wrote a book, Hitler, and he said exactly - in 1920 or 1921, nobody took it seriously - and he said exactly what he would be doing if he were to get into a government. Everybody was amused. It was after the First World War, he wrote it in 1920.

AG: Do you remember when you started seeing Nazis in the streets in Berlin, demonstrations or people in uniform?

**Tape 2: 6 minutes 20 seconds**

MG: I saw the Nazis. And we had to have in the passport a special name put in, for men 'Isaac' and for the women also a Jewish name next to one's own name. But nobody believed it could get to that stage until 1936. Kristallnacht was 1938. My father said, 'I never leave Berlin', because financially they will be broke. So that's why so many people stayed there.

AG: He must have felt a patriotic German; he fought in the First World War? He'd been wounded.

MG: Yes, but he never-, nobody believed, obviously, what would happen.

AG: What did you do when you came back to Berlin from this country?

MG: I worked in a clothing firm.

AG: What did you do?

MG: I did the books actually.

AG: Had you learnt that, did you learn bookkeeping or whatever it's called?

MG: Very little.

AG: What sort of firm was this?

MG: A clothing firm.

AG: Was it a Jewish firm?

MG: It was a Jewish firm.

AG: Where was it?

MG: Dönhoffplatz. It was in the sort of city near where Wertheim... I have forgotten now, to be quite frank, where it was exactly. It was where all the clothing firms were.

AG: How long did you stay at this firm?

MG: Three years.

**Tape 2: 9 minutes 39 seconds**

AG: Was it able to keep going after 1933?

MG: After 1933? I could stay up to 1936, one could stay, but my elder brother was already in Paris. And the younger brother was at school, so-. Nobody believed that it could come to-, could understand why it came. The Nationalist Party thought, ' We let Hitler in and then we take over.' Nobody thought of das Tausendjährige Reich.

AG: When you came back to Berlin, you continued living with your parents?

MG: Yes, I was living with my parents until I left.

AG: Did you have interests, a social life? How did you spend your time when you weren't working?

MG: Well, I had a lot of friends actually. And I played Bridge. And I had friends; they had a big place in Werder an der Havel. The grandfather was the founder of the *Börsenkurier*.

AG: The *Berliner Börsenkurier*?

MG: Yes.

AG: What was his name, do you remember?

MG: Yes, Hirschmann.

**Tape 2: 12 minutes 7 seconds**

AG: Could you describe how your life was, now you were a young woman living in Berlin?

MG: Yes, well, I had a lot of friends. I liked the theatre, I liked the museums and I worked. The weekends I usually spent also often in Werder where these friends of mine had a big estate. There are now 29 houses built on their estate, the Russians-. But the children live in the States, they were not interested in the financial side.

AG: You said that for holidays you often used to go to Ostend.

MG: Ostend, yes. Because two brothers lived in Brussels, they were bankers. My uncle lived in London; we lived in Berlin, so the family met. Before the war Caruso was singing there.

AG: Caruso? In Ostend?

MG: Yes. He always got an open cheque because the Casino belonged to the government, and he was a big gambler. It was a very fashionable place before the First World War, Ostend.

AG: Do you remember which hotel you stayed at?

MG: No.

AG: Was that the only place you went on holidays or did you go to Switzerland-

MG: In Switzerland I went skiing. Not very well, but I went skiing and I enjoyed it.

AG: Where did you go, do you remember?

MG: Yes, Engadin. Sankt Moritz and Sils Maria and Pontresina, the whole Engadin.

AG: Did you go up to the Baltic Coast from Berlin on holiday ever?

MG: No, as I say, summer was Ostend.

AG: I see.

MG: And that was just family gatherings. And winter was sports.

**Tape 2: 15 minutes 34 seconds**

AG: Did you notice your life change when Hitler came to power in January 1933?

MG: I remember the day because the press was there. I would say 70 percent was Jewish in the press, which was a strange thing. Ullstein-. But it was like a morgue that was the day of the Press Ball [*Presseball*, AB], nobody danced.

AG: Did you see any Nazi processions or celebrations?

MG: No, it was the day he got in, everything else came later. I mean the press didn't even realise, nobody took it seriously. And the Deutschnationalen-, they thought if Hitler gets in, they helped him to get in and then they thought they could take over. But they made a mistake. We had a very weak government, it was in a mess.

AG: Did you notice that your father was affected professionally after 1933? Could he continue to practise?

MG: Well, he must have lost some of his patients. But the amazing thing is that his best friend, who was a gynaecologist, he went to the Netherlands. He sent his sons to Switzerland; they were all still young. And when they-, all of a sudden there were these transports, but that was much later of course, to Auschwitz, and the woman said, 'Who is coming?' and they mentioned the name, and he said, 'Oh, you can't let him go, he saved my life.' That was a friend of my father.

**Tape 2: 18 minutes 58 seconds**

AG: What was his name, do you remember?

MG: Yes. Dr Ernst Solbs. Yes, twice it happened for him and then he went into hiding. It was, as I say, our family for instance, the Belgians were very good where the Nazis-, they were hiding the Jews. But one of these Nazis, they got some money from the Jews. And they always knew when the transports were. And one of these Nazis got drunk, and typically in a German way, he put everything down, details, the names, what they'd paid him, and all of a sudden, the ones who went to Belgium all died.

AG: That included your relatives?

MG: My relatives, yes.

AG: Going back to you and your family in Berlin, how did life develop? I mean you spent three years in Berlin while the Nazis were in power.

MG: I was personally not affected in these three years.

AG: Not at all? Or perhaps some of your friends or acquaintances were more distant?

**Tape 2: 21 minutes 11 seconds**

MG: No, up to 1936 you were pretty safe. But somewhere it all depended what Nazi type was around. In the streets I wasn't really bothered. It was only after 1936, then they really smashed the shops, and that wasn't really before 1936, not where I lived.

AG: You said you worked at this textile firm where you did the books for about three years.

MG: Yes.

AG: Where did you go after that? Did you go on working?

MG: No, then I didn't work anymore.

AG: Was this because you couldn't find a job or-

MG: As I say, friends of mine wanted to go away. And we worked out where and what we could do.

AG: By 'going away' you mean emigrate?

MG: Emigrate.

AG: Did you discuss that with your parents?

MG: My parents thought that it's impossible, they will not go.

AG: Your mother as well?

MG: My mother wouldn't have left my father in any case. So all in all, I personally wasn't affected.

AG: But you decided-

MG: I saw it coming, obviously. And we decided where we would go. Part of the family went to the States and one cousin of mine really was one of the three Jews who worked out the German currency for-. He was made-, he was never in the Army, he went to America, he was a professor of economics at Yale University.

AG: What was his name?

MG: Raymond Goldsmith.

AG: When you say the German currency, was this the reformed currency after the inflation?

MG: Yes.

**Tape 2: 4 minutes 32 seconds**

AG: Really?

MG: Yes, they were three Jews. Galbraith said they really were part of the success of Adenauer after-

AG: Oh, I see, after the war?

MG: Yes, that was after the war.

AG: You said that your older brother went to Paris?

MG: Yes.

AG: When was that?

MG: As I say, he went to Paris 1933. He always-, he loved travelling. And as I say, when he had a bit of money, he went wherever. He couldn't keep money. He said, 'I'm going to Paris.' And then, from Paris, he left for South Africa and that was the reason why I went to South Africa, as I had a brother there.

AG: Why did he go to South Africa?

MG: It suited him. As I say, he lived for the day, but he was always enthusiastic whatever he did.

AG: Could he just go to South Africa? I thought it wasn't so easy to go to South Africa?

MG: Well, apparently for him it was, I don't know.

AG: When you were deciding where to go, did you then decide to go to South Africa?

MG: Yes, because he was there.

AG: So this would be 1936 you decided you'd go?

MG: I'd go to South Africa.

AG: That's a very long way to go.

MG: Yes, as I say, the maiden voyage of the *Sterling Castle*. And there was one of the Jewish passengers, there was a festivity, I don't know, it was a black tie, and he had the Iron Cross on his suit. So we sent him to Coventry.

**Tape 2: 27 minutes 26 seconds**

AG: Did you discuss with your parents that you were going to emigrate?

MG: Yes, we thought as my brother was there it was pretty easy to still go to South Africa. Because some countries you couldn't go-, America was difficult, you need, it's like now, to get the Green Card or something. And I thought maybe South Africa, it's a different country, might be quite nice, as he described it. After all, we got the letters from him. And it was fairly easy to still get to that continent. It's pretty high, Johannesburg, it's like Sankt Moritz. And the climate actually was good.

AG: What was your parents' attitude towards your emigration?

MG: Yes, they wanted us out, but they didn't want to go themselves.

AG: So what date did you actually go?

MG: I had some family; she was a fashion photographer, Eva. And I said I might try to sell her fashion photographs in South Africa. The reason why my parents got out was, I worked there in a shop for jewellery and a journalist came to me and said, 'Your name is Goldschmidt?' I said yes. 'I've got some bad news for you.' I said, 'What is it?' - 'Your parents are still in Germany and there were caught by the Nazis, with two children here in South Africa.' I said, 'I can't understand this because I still spoke to them.' So I phoned up my uncle in London and I said, 'My parents are taken?' And he was so excited he said he'd ring me later. And he arranged a gentile friend to go to Germany and see what happened to my parents. But there was a lawyer Goldschmidt with two children in South Africa, it was a misunderstanding. But my parents got out within a week; that was the reason my parents got out.

**Tape 2: 31 minutes 56 seconds**

AG: What year was this? When did they come? Where did they go?

MG: That was I think 1938.

AG: And where did they go? Did they come straight to England?

MG: Yes, my uncle arranged here everything. He rented a house near himself. But my mother apparently had already everything packed, because they were out within a week.

**Tape 2: 32 minutes 38 seconds**

**Recording missing here. Restart at Tape 2: 34 minutes 15 seconds.**

MG:...paper, he was an American, and said, 'That's Greuelpropaganda!'

AG: Atrocity propaganda, horror stories.



MG: Greuel, yes. And he thought I wanted money from him, he was not very friendly. I said, 'I only want you to deny that you made a mistake, because the Germans-' And all of a sudden he got so friendly and offered me cake and coffee, because after all, they check everything and I was afraid of..., that's why they got out.

AG: You were afraid that the Germans might take reprisals against your brother, I see.

MG: Yes reprisals, yes. And he said, 'Okay, it will be done.' And within a week they were out.

AG: Going back to you, you sailed to South Africa, from where, from Hamburg?

MG: Where did I sail? It was, as I say, something South..., I have forgotten.

AG: It doesn't matter. And what was the ship that you sailed on?

MG: The *Sterling Castle*.

AG: That's a British ship.

MG: Yes, it was the maiden voyage.

AG: So was this a big liner?

MG: It was a big liner.

AG: What was the journey like?

MG: The journey was fine, as it was the maiden-. And all the refugees sat together.

AG: Were there quite a number of refugees?

MG: Yes, there were quite a lot.

AG: What sort of people?

MG: All sorts. Some very nice, some not so nice, a mixture.

AG: How long did it take to get down to South Africa?

MG: I think a fortnight.

AG: A fairly comfortable form of emigration. It was presumably some sort of luxury liner, more or less?

MG: Yes, it was-, these things I can't remember anymore, but it was a very comfortable voyage.

AG: Where did you land in South Africa?

MG: Cape Town.

**Tape 2: 37 minutes 17 seconds**

AG: And did your brother meet you there?

MG: Yes.

AG: What happened? How did you find South Africa?

MG: Oh, Cape Town is beautiful.

AG: But your brother was living in Johannesburg.

MG: In Johannesburg, and I went to Port Elisabeth.

AG: Where is that in South Africa?

MG: Well, Port Elisabeth is not very far from Cape Town, really.

AG: Did you have a job there?

MG: Oh, I got a job fairly easily. The wool merchants were all French for some reason or other. And they liked somebody in their business, French-speaking.

AG: Ah, you learnt French in Lausanne.

MG: Yes, so that was no problem. I had a job right away as my brother spent nearly the £45 I had in Cape Town. As I say, the value of the money was slightly different from today.

AG: But it must have still been quite daunting for you: you were, what, twenty-four, you come to a completely strange continent. Were you living by yourself in Port Elisabeth?

MG: No, I remember, actually the one brother died now in Johannesburg, he was not able to look after himself, he was in a sort of hospital there and – what did you just say?

AG: I asked you how you managed when you first arrived.

MG: Oh yes, I got into a boarding house, I think it was £8 a month; you earned accordingly. With board and lodging. This home is now the old-age home in Johannesburg, and he died recently.

AG: That's the owner of the boarding house?

MG: No, I shared a room with her, and she was in the Jewish old-age home where my brother died and she went to the cremation.

**Tape 2: 40 minutes 33 seconds**

AG: So you made friends and acquaintances through-

MG: Yes, and the climate was good. And there were quite a few very nice people, emigrants, in Port Elisabeth. The ship passed there.

AG: Was this where you got the job in the jewellery shop, was this where you worked?

MG: No.

AG: Oh no, you worked with wool merchants, you said.

MG: Yes.

AG: So how long did you stay in Port Elisabeth?

MG: I stayed there about two years. And then, my brother lived in Johannesburg and then I decided I go to Johannesburg as well. Johannesburg is very high, as high as Sankt Moritz, 1700 meters high. But it's dry; it's a very good climate, really.

AG: And what did you do in Johannesburg?

MG: I worked at the stock exchange.

AG: Oh did you? What were you doing in the stock exchange?

MG: Bookkeeping.

AG: Did you come across a lot of other Jews in Johannesburg?

MG: Plenty.

AG: Did you mainly mix with other Jews?

MG: Yes. It's funny, I once went to a club and the woman said to me, 'You know, I never met a Jew.' I was the first one. And there were lots of Jewish people. And there you don't mix. We really-, the emigrants, they stuck to each other.

AG: So you didn't mix much, say, with English-speaking and British South Africans, or Dutch, or Afrikaners?

MG: No Afrikaners. There are very few Afrikaners in Johannesburg. They are in Bloemfontein. But it was a healthy life. One played tennis and one did a lot of sports.

**Tape 2: 43 minutes 40 seconds**

Well, I lived with a friend of mine. She came also to Johannesburg. I shared a flat with her, the one who was German champion in javelin throwing.

AG: What was her name?

MG: Marte Jakob. The one daughter wanted to write now a book about her.

AG: She was actually German champion? So she might have represented Germany at the Olympics?

MG: 1928, yes. She was not World Champion, [the World Champion, AB] was American, but she was German champion in 1928.

AG: How had you met her? Did you meet her in South Africa?

MG: No, here in-, I met her actually in Berlin.

AG: And where was your flat? I don't know Johannesburg, but where was your flat, what part of town?

MG: Oh, in a good part. It had actually a swimming pool on top of the apartment block! Which was very nice for people who swam.

AG: And what was it like working at the stock exchange?

MG: That was actually quite enjoyable because it varied so often, up and down. That was a fairly easy job. But I quite enjoyed it. And also the circle of friends were nice, so all in all, life was easy in South Africa.

AG: What was Johannesburg like as a town in the 1930s?

MG: Well, it changed a lot. It was pretty primitive. If, for instance, you went on a rainy day outside Johannesburg, the roads... You had to try whether you could go with a car, if the water was pretty high, whether the car would take it. There was no asphalt outside Johannesburg. So it was quite an experience.

AG: Did you come into contact with the sort of mines?

MG: I was never in a goldmine, no.

**Tape 2: 47 minutes 15 seconds**

AG: What about the Africans, Blacks you came in contact with?

MG: Oh yes, there my father was quite helpful. We had, the Whites, the Apartheid, some Whites were really horrible to the Blacks. And I had a black servant and the police were so terrible. They have to have a card, like the identity card.

AG: A pass?

MG: Yes, a pass. So he was, for instance, standing in front of the gates. My parents were there, they visited me.

AG: Your parents visited you, from Berlin??

MG: No, no, from London. And so he said he is getting his pass. And he had his skull cracked open because he was standing outside the gate where he wasn't allowed to stand. And he didn't want to go with the police because they killed them, they chucked them out of the

police cars. So I said I shall-, my father was there, we shall take him. And they postponed the case eight times and then the magistrate asked my father, 'Why are you so interested?' He said, 'Out of humanity.' And he was still fined 5 whatever, because he didn't have his pass on him. That was quite an experience. The police was so anti-Black.

AG: It wasn't them who injured this servant? You said he had his skull-

MG: Yes, he was in hospital.

AG: How did he come to get that injury?

**Tape 2: 50 minutes 10 seconds**

MG: He turned back to get it. They are not allowed to sleep in the same [room, AB] where you sleep; they had their own bunkers there. So he turned around, opened the gate, and he got the crack on his skull. Mandela did a good job.

AG: And during this time when you were working in South Africa, did you have contact with your parents in Berlin?

MG: No, at that time my parents were already in England.

AG: Yes, but before they came to England, did you have any contact with them at all?

MG: Yes, letters I still got. But telephone calls.

AG: Ah, you could make telephone calls.

MG: Yes.

AG: And when was it that they came to England, 1938?

MG: 1938, yes.

AG: Before the Kristallnacht?

MG: Yes. As I say, within a week they got to England.

AG: And they then went to live in Beechwood Avenue?

MG: In Beechwood Avenue, yes, that was all arranged.

AG: Could your father work at all here?

MG: Yes, he was a locum during the war.

AG: I don't suppose the British allowed him to work before the war, did they?

MG: No, before the war he was, as I say, invalid and he was old, he didn't apply for work.

AG: How did they survive financially?

MG: Oh, by the brother. And he could have practised after the war because he was a locum during the war, so without passing exams. But he didn't.

AG: Where was he a locum during the war?

**Tape 2: 53 minutes 6 seconds**

MG: Around the corner really. That was a friend of his who went to war, and he did the practice.

AG: This was a British doctor who went to the war, or a refugee?

MG: A 'refu-Jew' I always say. Yes, because he couldn't walk well really since the First World War, so it was the next street, so that was no problem.

AG: How did your parents get on, both your father and your mother, when they had to leave for England in such a hurry, how did they get on in England?

MG: As I say, my mother had all-, she never threw anything away, so everything was packed. The transport I don't know how they did it, but within a week they were here, in London. So my father, most likely, already saw how wrong he was about the-. But that was quickly done through my uncle.

AG: Your younger brother came with them?

MG: My younger brother was in London.

AG: Oh, he'd already come? He came before your parents?

MG: Yes, he came with a friend of mine, as I say, with the javelin thrower.

AG: Oh yes, I see. So he was being educated-

MG: -here. He worked. He was good at his work.

AG: What did he work in?

MG: He worked in the men's material in Piccadilly somewhere. But that worked out well, but my mother lost a lot of her family.

AG: Ah yes. We'll have to stop now because the tape is coming to an end. We just have a break while we change the tape.

**Tape 2: 56 minutes 2 seconds**

**TAPE 3**

AG: Marion Gerver, Tape 3.

Going back to you in South Africa, do you remember the outbreak of war in 1939?

MG: Oh yes.

AG: Could you describe where you were and how you heard?

MG: Well, you always had the newspapers.

AG: Did it come as a shock to you?

MG: Well, I expected it. I expected the war when I read the English papers. Did we have English papers? The one who owned the papers, he was American. Well, we followed actually the whole procedure, the politics here.

AG: And did the outbreak of war affect you at all? Did you lose your job or anything?

MG: No, I learnt the Red Cross because we all had to do something. And I took the exam. I had duty in the film industry.

AG: Did you?

MG: Yes, I had to watch the films in case somebody.... It was such an easy job. It was really nothing. But we weren't affected in South Africa. We did our duty, whatever they wanted and there was no effect.

AG: So your job and your life generally continued-

MG: Much the same.

AG: What about your parents over here though?

MG: My mother did some work, I don't really know what it was. Really it was nothing serious. But I lost-, I had cousins here. One cousin was killed in the first German bombing. He was on a roof somewhere and he got killed with the first bombing.

**Tape 3: 3 minutes 36 seconds**

AG: In London?

MG: In London. And opposite us, the men, they lost-, their roof was smashed and when my parents went over he said, 'An awful mess we had last night.'

AG: That was a German bomb up in Finchley?

MG: In Finchley, yes.

AG: Were you worried about your parents?

MG: Not really, because they had a cellar. Not very convenient, but when the siren-, they went to the cellar.

AG: Did they have any difficulties because they were technically 'enemy aliens'?

MG: Well, because my father could work as a doctor, so there was no problem there.

AG: I suppose they needed doctors, too.

MG: A lawyer for instance, they got onto the Isle of Wight. They kept the immigrants on the Isle of Wight. He was lucky in that way that he could live his normal life whereas others were put on the Isle of Wight, immigrants.

AG: So they survived the war fairly well in London?

MG: Yes.

AG: What about your younger brother? I'm interested to hear about his career in the army; that sounds quite interesting.

MG: Yes, he often talked about it because he started at the bottom and moved up. I also didn't know much why he was in Suez. And all this is not much clear to me, how he got there. And I actually play Bridge with two of his friends and they knew him well, but how he got-, he must have been able....

**Tape 3: 6 minutes 0 second**

AG: He must have been Lieutenant Colonel, a very senior rank. Do you know what branch of the army he was in, was he an engineer or-

MG: No, I really don't know what he did to get to Suez.

AG: I mean the Suez Canal is tremendously important; I thought he might be involved in transport or something if he was in the Canal area.

MG: Yes, he often spoke about it but never mentioned how he got there.

AG: Was he part of the fighting forces, do you know, if he was in action?

MG: No, I don't think he was in action.

AG: Oh, so he went straight from this menswear shop in Piccadilly into the army and-

MG: -climbed up the ladder.

AG: Pretty impressive. Anyway, going back to you in South Africa, you got married in South Africa I believe?

MG: Yes.

AG: Could you tell me, first of all, who your husband was, what was his name?

MG: Gerver.

AG: And his first name?



MG: Frank.

AG: How did you meet him? Who was he?

MG: Oh, I met him, I think it was a party. And then we went out together for quite a while and then he proposed to me.

AG: Was he a refugee as well?

MG: No, he wasn't a refugee. He lived there. He originally came from Europe.

AG: Eastern Europe?

MG: I think from Poland. And his family lived here in London. I met his family in London and also in America. And in Israel, they were all over. I think the mother had eight or nine children, so it was a big family. And then we got married.

**Tape 3: 9 minutes 55 seconds**

AG: When did you get married?

MG: I really don't know the date. But the reason we had Ronny as a child was, Ronny was handicapped at the birth, unfortunately. And he had cerebral palsy, and he still has. But the child specialist recommended me, if I can afford it, there is a good brain specialist in Oxford, I should go to see him.

AG: In Oxford, in Britain? But you were still in South Africa?

MG: I was in South Africa. And the diagnosis was 100 percent correct. The brain, where the intelligence is, was not affected. But anyhow, it was quite a serious matter, and then the marriage broke up.

AG: So you came to this country with your son Ronald for medical reasons?

MG: Yes.

AG: And had your husband come with you or did he stay in South Africa?

MG: No, he couldn't quite take it, he stayed in South Africa.

**Tape 3: 12 minutes 30 seconds**

AG: So you came to England in 1947, you said?

MG: I went back to South Africa for a short while for various arrangements and then I came back to Europe.

AG: How did you find England? It must have been very different from South Africa in 1947 or 1948. What was it like?

MG: Well, England, you couldn't get anything.

AG: Did you find it very austere?

MG: Yes, very austere. But people have taken it well. I mean the difficulties they had here.

AG: You found the British coped quite well?

MG: Quite well.

AG: And how did London seem, I mean it must have been still badly damaged?

MG: Badly damaged. But all in all, I mean the architecture, these big high rise flats, all in all, they had Churchill, you know.

AG: Did that mean a lot to you?

MG: Well, he wasn't elected after the war, which was surprising. No, life here was rather primitive. I find the housing and so on very primitive. I was a Liberal all my life. The way the houses with the toilets outside-.

AG: Were you politically active then?

MG: Very active.

AG: For the Liberal Party?

MG: Yes.

AG: In? Where you lived?

MG: Here.

**Tape 3: 15 minutes 38 seconds**

AG: I should have asked, did you go and live with your parents then or where did you live?

MG: Partly with my parents and then I took my nephew as well who had a Klump [club-foot, AB] foot which should have been operated and he didn't get on with his brother so I took him.

AG: Your nephew, you said? That's the son of your younger brother?

MG: Of my older brother, yes.

AG: So you had this nephew and you had your own son, Ron.

MG: Yes.

AG: Where did you live then?

MG: Well, we lived partly in Finchley and then I took an apartment in the suburb.

AG: Hampstead Garden suburb.

MG: Yes.

AG: Where? Do you remember the address?

MG: Yes, Littleton Court.

AG: And were you able to work, with your son and with your nephew?

MG: No, I couldn't work. They both needed me. My nephew was two years older than Ronny.

AG: What was your nephew's name?

MG: Goldsmith.

AG: And his first name?

MG: Glenn.

AG: So you were living in the garden suburb.

MG: Well, I rented a flat; they were quite cheap at the time. I think it was £60 for rent.

AG: £60 for how long?

MG: It was quite cheap. And £60 rent for, was it for a year or something?

AG: It could well be.

MG: It was very cheap. And it had no lift and we were on the top floor, but it was a modern building.

**Tape 3: 18 minutes 40 seconds**

AG: What was it called?

MG: Belvedere Court.

AG: Your son, were you able to send him to school?

MG: Yes, he went first to a school in the suburb when he was small. And then he went to various schools, because there were difficulties with writing and so on. He was I think in eight different schools.

AG: Did he do exams and things?

MG: Yes, he got a secretary to write for him. He did his O-Levels and A-Levels, he got a secretary from the Council.

AG: Which school was he at when he did his O- and A-Levels?

MG: Oh, he went, as I say, to so many different schools. His A-Levels, he was in a grammar-. no, he was in the co-ed here in Eaton Avenue, there was a co-ed school.

AG: Where did he go after his A-Levels?

MG: Well, to Reading.

AG: Yes, I know, I'm just asking you for the film. He went to Reading University?

MG: Yes.

AG: Do you remember what he studied there?

MG: He studied German for one thing, maths, the usual. And afterwards he studied literature and then from Reading he went to Germany. That came a bit later.

**Tape 3: 21 minutes 53 seconds**

AG: He would have gone for a year to Germany if he was studying German.

MG: He went for two years. One year in Freiburg. One year, the one in Freiburg.

AG: Did you ever go back to Germany yourself?

MG: Yes.

AG: When did you first go?

MG: First, I think I went even with Ron first. And then you couldn't by car... You went through the Russian part, which was quite dangerous, because if something, if your car broke down, it was quite a problem.

AG: You drove through the Soviet occupied Zone? Was this because you were going back to Berlin?

MG: I went back to Berlin.

AG: Do you remember what year it was? How old was your son?

MG: How old, Ronny? He was still quite young. I don't know the exact date now, but Berlin was a shocking mess.

AG: How do you remember it?

MG: Because, well, Berlin, let's say, was very heavily bombed. And they hadn't quite started yet... And they had the Wall.

AG: Did you go back to where you'd lived?

**Tape 3: 24 minutes 30 seconds**

MG: No. That was completely bombed, so I didn't. It was a strange part.

AG: What were your reasons for going to Germany?

MG: Well, the reason was really I wanted to see what had happened. First of all I thought I might see our apartment, but as there was nothing... So it was very funny: we stayed in a hotel with my aunt, and we saw only where my grandparents lived, the number was only there. The building wasn't there, but just the number.

AG: What were your feelings when you came back to Germany, came back to Berlin?

MG: Well, depressed. That something like this could happen. After all, I lost a lot of my family there.

AG: Yes, I was going to ask you about that.

MG: I went to the cemetery, but the cemetery was in a shocking mess.

AG: Which cemetery was this?

MG: Weißensee. One couldn't walk there yet.

AG: Was that in the East of Berlin?

MG: Yes.

AG: You could cross. And what were your feelings about the Germans?

MG: It was a strange thing. I also-, there was no hate, because quite a few of the family got saved. They stayed a night here, a night there.

AG: Really?

MG: Yes. And I was in New York Harbour and they arrived there after the war through the Red Cross and I had a cousin and the husband, they spent every night somewhere else. But these people risked their lives themselves and I always wondered, would I have done it?

**Tape 3: 27 minutes 27 seconds**

AG: But nonetheless, you must have felt, when you went back, that quite a lot of Germans had been Nazis?

MG: Oh yes, certainly.

AG: How did they behave towards you when you met Germans?

MG: They were very nice really to me. But I never, I mean I was depressed that human beings can behave like that, especially as-, it was-, I could never understand the mentality.

AG: Did they realise that you were a German-Jewish émigré who had come back from England?

MG: Oh yes. They couldn't have been more polite than they were.

AG: Did you meet people that you had known before?

MG: No. Berlin was really still in a-, very appalling to look at.

AG: You didn't feel it served them right, putting it bluntly?

MG: I couldn't understand the mentality. I met the Germans before the war, during the war and after, it was all... Well, I know the Hundred Years War was... I simply... It was a strange place for me.

AG: When had you first, or your parents, first found out what happened to their family?

**Tape 3: 30 minutes 2 seconds**

MG: Slowly it came. My father's family I think they all lived. It was only my mother's family who was affected. They all went to America, I don't know why, when... It was depressing.

AG: Did your mother search for her family or-

MG: Oh yes. But the strange thing is, only my mother's-, the one who was in Theresienstadt, it took two years before she knew that she was alive! The Russians came and they opened Theresienstadt and they didn't give them a plan, where it was. After four weeks or six weeks, they were back in Theresienstadt, because they had no map or anything. And then she got to the hospital and only two years later she knew that she was still alive.

AG: Who was this, a cousin or-

MG: That was the sister of my mother.

AG: Your mother's sister?

MG: Yes. Because they had no maps, the Russians just opened and that was it. And then she got into a hospital and then her mind wasn't quite there and only after two years she found out.

AG: And where did she go?

MG: She had two daughters in America, she went to America. And I was at the airport [harbour] when the ship arrived. And I had another cousin who had spent every night somewhere else, with her husband. And they all had these Red Cross shoes on. And it was a terrible crossing, everybody got sick. It must have been-, we waited about four hours where

the boat landed. And then, to see one's family again, everybody, you know, it was really heartbreaking, they all cried. It was in New York.

AG: Oh, you went to New York?

MG: Yes.

AG: Had you gone to visit family?

**Tape 3: 33 minutes 40 seconds**

MG: Yes. As I say, my father's family was practically intact. I don't think anyone really got-. They left.

AG: What about your mother's side though?

MG: My mother lost a lot of family.

AG: Did she have other brothers and sisters apart from this lady who survived Theresienstadt?

MG: Oh, she had, they were five. She lost five family-.

AG: And her parents?

MG: Well, her parents were already dead. The mother died 1937 and she was the only one left in Berlin. But she died of natural causes.

AG: And how did your own parents get on in London? You must have seen them very frequently?

MG: Yes, well, they had-, the family, my uncle arranged - he had a sister and a friend, he arranged an apartment for them, all near, they could visit each other.

AG: In Finchley?

MG: Yes, around the corner, practically. So all in all, they were glad they had him.

AG: And yourself, what did you do apart from looking after your son and your nephew? How did your life develop once you settled in Hampstead Garden suburb?

**Tape 3: 36 minutes 11 seconds**

MG: Oh well, I worked eventually. I worked here. I had a wine agency.

AG: Did you? What sort of wine were you dealing with?

MG: Mosel.

AG: How did you come to start that?

MG: Well, I met some people and then they wanted to introduce the wine here and then I had the wine agency.

AG: That's very enterprising of you! Where did you work from, did you have an office?

MG: I didn't actually, no, I worked from home. That worked quite well.

AG: Were you involved in the importing of the wine or wholesale?

MG: Import, yes.

AG: Where did you import it from?

MG: From the Mosel.

AG: Did you have particular dealers in Germany?

MG: Yes. It wasn't a very successful one, but it was alright.

AG: And who did you sell to in this country?

MG: Hotels.

AG: Did the German wine sell well?

MG: Yes, well, there are quite a few German wines.

AG: Some of them are very good. I know that the English used to drink this frightful Liebfraumilch. Was it easy to get hotels to sell German wine?

MG: No, it was quite a job because there was plenty of competition. And now the world is the competition.

AG: So did you go around from hotel to hotel with samples or how did it work?

MG: Yes, I wrote. I made appointments.

AG: Did you supply any well-known hotels?

MG: Not the very large ones, no.

**Tape 3: 39 minutes 6 seconds**

AG: Were they mainly in London?

MG: In London.

AG: And how long did you do that for?

MG: For two years. And then I had a little restaurant in Soho. Well, somebody asked me to, they lost all their money and they asked me whether I could give them £800 so that they can



take a loan for £800. And I don't need to be there all the time and I said okay. And I never worked so much in my life because they always had problems with the staff. I did it also for only two years.

AG: What was it called, the restaurant, do you remember?

MG: Yes, a terrible name, the 'Fresserie'!

AG: The 'Fresserie' – oh dear! Was this supposed to be for refugees?

MG: No. I was supposed to be the sleeping partner, because I actually had Ronny. And I never worked so much and it isn't really anything I liked. But they had plenty of problems with the staff and after two years I said, 'Listen, I stop'. They stopped, too.

AG: Did you have other enterprises?

MG: I dabbled a bit in property.

AG: Where were the properties?

MG: Well, one in West Hampstead. I bought it I think for £2,000. Not today anymore.

AG: No, indeed not.

**Tape 3: 42 minutes 9 seconds**

MG: And then I really worked quite hard for the Liberal Party.

AG: In which constituency?

MG: Actually in a Conservative place; that was in Finchley.

AG: Mrs Thatcher was in Finchley.

MG: Yes, we came second. The Liberals were always third; but we came second then. And she, Mrs Thatcher was somewhere else where she didn't-. But Finchley was always Conservative. Now it isn't any longer. As I say, I haven't dabbled in politics for a long time. But we came second and we were really very busy.

AG: How did you find, for example, when you were involved in politics, how did you find the English treated you and behaved towards you?

MG: Oh, very funny. I was there in the suburb. And they had three notices out: one in the family was-, it could never happen in Germany – one was Liberal, one was Conservative, one was Labour. It said: 'There is never a dull moment in our family!'

AG: How did you get on with the English, how did you find them?

MG: Oh, very pleasant.

AG: You didn't have any hostility or-

MG: That is the difference. In Germany it would never have happened, there were so many Parties. Here, all the Parties are friendly together.

AG: No, I meant you personally, apart from politics. How did you find you got on with the English when you came to live in London?

**Tape 3: 45 minutes 2 seconds**

MG: Actually quite well because, for instance, I played Bridge. One was a diplomat, one was Secretary General of NALGO, that was Geoffrey Drain, and one was Cockerell's-, the father, the professor. The son was the one who did the Panorama, Cockerell.

AG: Oh, Michael Cockerell?

MG: Michael Cockerell's father.

AG: Where did you play Bridge with them?

MG: We played Bridge. I went around. The only one who didn't cook - they all cooked, Cockerell's father cooked - was Geoffrey Drain, the Secretary General.

AG: Oh, NALGO, that's the Local Government Union, yes, I remember.

MG: They are both dead.

AG: And your social life, did you mix a lot with other refugees?

MG: Yes, there was quite a few, but also with other people. For instance, I stayed with the Consul General when I was in Bâle, Consul..., I don't even remember his name now, he lived in the suburb. I had a mixture of people, really quite a mixture, but they are all dead.

AG: Did you find that the refugees and the English mixed-

MG: Mixed quite well.

AG: And your English acquaintances, were they Jewish or Christians or-

MG: Well, they were really mixed. I had a friend, she was a Reuters executor, she was very funny. She was Conservative, but belonged to the Fabian Society. You know, the one was left, the one was right. She is still alive, unfortunately, but her brain's gone.

AG: Where there things that you particularly liked about England and London, or disliked? Or that struck you, particularly?

**Tape 3: 48 minutes 12 seconds**

MG: Well, it's a different culture. For instance, you hear the Christian name first. And you never shake hands. It's a different way of living, yes. In Germany they would never talk to you using the first name.

AG: More formal?

MG: Very much more formal.

AG: How long did you stay in the garden suburb?

MG: Quite a while, quite a few years. From the suburb I went back to Finchley and then I sold the house.

AG: And then you moved here?

MG: Yes, because a cousin of mine was supposed... I had Ronny, and a cousin of mine who was a professor at Yale. He didn't realise that he got doubly taxed in America and in England. I said, 'You should have known that.' He said, 'I must have been out of my faculties.' And his children live in America. He lost his wife very quickly; she was also an economist. She was in London, won an award, and looked as strong as a really strong person, but she said she's always tired. She went back to America and had an X-ray, and she had cancer of the liver.

**Tape 3: 51 minutes 8 seconds**

AG: What was this cousin's name, the professor?

MG: Goldsmith.

AG: And his first name?

MG: Raymond.

AG: Ah, you mentioned him before, the economist. One other thing I haven't asked you is what your son did professionally after he left university?

MG: He sent out a lot of application. He carried on studying. And then I said, 'Once you have to face the world.' And he sent out applications and applications. It was very difficult for him. And then he found an advert from the BBC World Service, but it said, "Someone who knows the job". And he got to the interview, and the interviewer, - he is still friendly with him - he said to the interviewer, 'I know I have no experience, but can't you at least try me?' And that's where he still is today.

AG: That's a considerable achievement.

MG: Yes, it was very difficult. But he is still very friendly with him. They are retired now for a long time.

AG: Just for the film, what does he do at the BBC World Service?

MG: He is a talk writer and an editor. He edits and he has to check whether it's correct whatever they write. And he writes himself. And he likes his job.

AG: I'm not surprised. I think most people would like the BBC; it must be a very pleasant place to work.

MG: Yes, they are all very friendly together. When I was there, the atmosphere is very nice.

AG: Where does he work, in which building of the BBC?

MG: Bush House. Oh, he enjoys the work. He retires soon.

**Tape 3: 54 minutes 10 seconds**

AG: I never asked you what became of the other boy that you looked after, your nephew?

MG: Oh, he's alright, he's a travelling salesman. He is quite successful in what he's doing and he enjoys it. He comes often to London.

AG: Where does he live?

MG: In South Africa. His mother is still alive, she's 96.

AG: Now, you told me that your brother in South Africa died relatively young.

MG: Yes.

AG: What about your younger brother, the one that was the Lieutenant Colonel? What did he do after the war?

MG: Well, we had some relatives in New York and he went to see them. And there was a tin magnate from South America there and he got employed.

AG: And that's why he went to South America and your father learnt Spanish?

MG: They never had a winter in England anymore. They went six months to Argentina and six months in England. So that was quite lucky. And he spent a month always with me here, when my parents died.

AG: And is your younger brother still alive?

MG: No, he lost his brain. It's a blessing he's gone. That went on for nine years. But he was very well looked after in Johannesburg

AG: The tape is coming to an end soon so I think probably we've covered more or less everything that we needed to. But I like just to ask you one question. When you think of your identity, do you see yourself as German, or German-Jewish, or British or-? Do you have a view on that?

MG: It doesn't affect me. I'm European.

AG: Well, in that case, I'll just say thank you very much for doing the interview with us.

MG: Thank you very much.

AG: It's a pleasure.

**Tape 3: 57 minutes 32 seconds**

**TAPE 4**

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photograph 1

AG: Could you tell me, please, who are the people in this photograph?

MG: Yes. My grandmother, my grandfather, my mother; she has four sisters and one brother.

AG: And the little baby?

MG: That's me.

AG: Thank you. And where was the photo taken?

MG: In Berlin.

AG: And when was it taken?

MG: I'm 94 years old.

AG: If you could just tell me the date, for the film. You were born in-

MG: In 1912.

Photograph 2

AG: Thank you. Who is the person in this photograph, please?

MG: My father.

AG: And where was the photograph taken?

MG: In Berlin.

AG: And when was it taken?

MG: 1920.

Photograph 3

AG: Who is the person in this photograph, please?

MG: It's my mother.

AG: Where was it taken?

MG: In Berlin.

AG: And when, approximately? Around the same time as the one of your father?

MG: 1920.

Photograph 4

AG: Who are the three people in these photographs, please?

MG: Myself and my two brothers.

AG: And where was the photograph taken?

MG: In Berlin.

AG: About when?

MG: 1930.

Photograph 5

AG: Who is the person in this photograph, please?

MG: My son.

AG: And his name, his first name?

MG: Ronald.

AG: And where was it taken?

MG: In London.

AG: And when?

MG: 1950.

AG: Thank you very much. That must be right, he looks about three.

**Tape 4: 3 minutes 5 seconds**

**THE END**