

IMPORTANT

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AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

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Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	87

Interviewee Surname:	Montrose
Forename:	Rudi
Interviewee Sex:	Male
Interviewee DOB:	24 May 1924
Interviewee POB:	Berlin, Germany

Date of Interview:	8 December 2004
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 87

NAME: RUDI MONTROSE

DATE: 8 DECEMBER 2004

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICS

TAPE ONE

BL: Today is the 8th of December 2004, we're conducting an interview with Rudi Montrose, we're in London, and my name is Bea Lewkowicz.

BL: Can you please tell me your name?

RM: Rudi Montrose.

BL: And what was your name at birth?

RM: Rudolf Rosenberg.

BL: And where were you born?

RM: Berlin.

BL: And when were you born?

RM: 24th of May 1924.

BL: Can you please tell me something about your family background?

RM: My father was Rumanian by birth, my mother was British by birth, and they met in Berlin, I don't know exactly when, but I think they married soon after they got to know each other, and my father was in business, first of all as a tobacco retailer - he had a shop - and then he was forced to give up his shop and he moved the business into the flat, and he was a wholesaler in cigarettes and tobacco, and cigars and all the rest of it. And he was an ailing person, and my mother more or less ran the business. And we had help in the form of a Gentile person who was an absolute gem, she was a wonderful person, and she really was what you would call a family factotum, and she helped bringing me up in so far as she took me to school and collected me from school when I was a young boy, and she helped with the business and she helped with the cleaning of the flat, and she performed every duty that you can think of. And she was loyal right up to the end.

Tape 1: 2 minutes 20 seconds

BL: What was her name?

RM: Her name was Martha, I can't remember her surname. She was a real country bumpkin really, she came from Silesia I believe, and that's about it. We've lost touch with her, of course.

BL: What are your memories of growing up in Berlin?

RM: Well I had a very happy childhood; really, my parents were always very good to me. I had every freedom I could possibly wish for, I used to be very keen on going about on a scooter when I was quite small, from about six years old I would say, and then I eventually graduated to a bike, and I cycled all over Berlin helping my father's business, delivering parcels of cigarettes and so on, to different people all over the place. And as far as school was concerned, my days in the Volksschule were quite pleasant, until, when was it, 1934, when boys used to run after me and shout '*Jude*' and so on. And that was the first time I really noticed that I was different from the rest. The other childhood memory is that I went to Kindergarten run by a Jewish lady and I was very happy there, and one thing I didn't particularly like was Jewish private lessons, and one day I remember I came home to my parents and I said, I don't want to go anymore. And anyway, I was made to go, of course, and then I transferred to the Mittelschule and that was an excellent school, because the teaching staff, I believe, were all ex-University lecturers who weren't allowed to lecture at universities any more. And I remember some of the teachers quite vividly, I don't know if you want to know about them. There was one Mr Simson, who was an— who was the impersonation of a Prussian teacher. I say Prussian on purpose, because he was terribly strict on discipline, he never let his hair down, except on one occasion. It was the week before he retired, and he gave us a short history of his life, and that was fascinating. The only time there was any personal contact between him and his class. Another teacher I remember quite vividly was my music teacher. A small fellow and he used to bring us up in front of the blackboard and he used to try and make us write notes.

Tape 1: 6 minutes 3 seconds

And I was never very good at that, and the one thing I remember distinctly was that he made us sing. He made the whole class sing as a choir. And then he would go along the lines of boys and say, 'you shut up, and you shut up' because we weren't singing in tune. And invariably I was the first one being told to shut up. And the only time we had any personal contact with our teachers was once or twice a year when we went on outings. Round about Berlin there were lots of places, forests and so on, where people go for picnics and outings or walks. And it was only, say, about 20 minutes on the train and then we walked as a group with our teachers, and that was the only opportunity we had to get to know them on a personal level, because in the classroom discipline was very strict indeed, I will give you an example. Whenever the teacher walked into the classroom we had to shoot up from our seats, and nobody dared to sit down until we were told to. And the Headmaster of the Mittelschule was also a very strict disciplinarian, and I remember having to go to him to get a form signed for a season ticket on the U-Bahn. And that man was so, so terribly strict and so unapproachable that one literally shook in one's shoes when one had to go and see him.

Tape 1: 8 minutes 9 seconds

Anyway, it didn't do us any harm. The other interesting thing about the Mittelschule is, although it was a huge school, the religious side of it was not rammed down our throats. Religious instruction was on a level as, for instance, instruction in Geography. It didn't take any higher importance than that. And it was confined to studying the prayer book, Jewish history and of course reading Hebrew. And unlike other Jewish schools, it didn't form the main part of the syllabus. What else?

BL: Can you tell me where were your grandparents?

RM: My grandparents were already in this country, in Manchester.

BL: Did you know them when you were younger, did they come to visit, did you visit them?

RM: My grandparents were – as a result of family difficulties were in very poor financial conditions– situation, and when I got to know my grandfather, when I got to know him first, was when I came over to one of my uncle's weddings. And at that time I must have been a boy of about eight or nine, and it was the first time I ever saw my grandparents. And then of course when I came over finally in August '38 I had to live with them in their house. And later on we were joined by my parents who came over in December '38 and so we were quite a crowd under one roof.

BL: What about your other grandparents, your father's parents?

RM: Well as regards my father's parents, let me tell you that I know literally nothing. [Becomes emotional]

Tape 1: 10 minutes 23 seconds

I always get emotional about this because I've never had a chance to really get to know my father. He died when I was 14 and all I know is that he was born in Rumania. I don't know anything about his parents, I don't know whether he had brothers and sisters, all I know is that he was a deserter from the Rumanian army, and somehow or other made his way to Berlin. And that's it. That's all I know about my father. There isn't a single photograph of his parents. All I have is a photograph, a small passport photograph apparently, which he brought over from Rumania, of his grandmother. And that photograph was enlarged in Berlin, and then painted over. It's a priceless possession as far as I'm concerned. You know, I wouldn't part with that for anything in the world. Because it's the only thing to remind me of my father's past. And unfortunately I was a boy of 14 when he died, it's not the sort of subject you discuss with your parents, you know, 'where have you come from?' and all the rest of it. So– and I knew absolutely nothing about my father and that is my very great regret to this day. I never really got a chance to get to know him.

Tape 1: 12 minutes 29 seconds

BL: How did they meet, your parents?

RM: Oh, there again, that I don't know. My mother was a shorthand typist for an import-export firm in Berlin, and my father had a tobacco business already, but how they met I don't know.

BL: But your mother was sent from, or came from, England to Berlin?

RM: Yes, yes. Actually it's an interesting story because my grandparents lived in Manchester where my mother was born, but soon after my mother was born, I don't know how old she was, but soon after she was born, they moved to Berlin. But my grandfather started a hat factory in Berlin, but then came the First World War, and my grandparents still had their British nationality, although originally they came from Poland, or some place like that, but they were British, and therefore they were expelled from Germany in 1914, together with my mother and my younger uncle - he was a young boy at the time - but the elder uncle - I have two uncles - and my mother, three children, and the elder brother was interned in a place called Ruhleben. And as it happened my father was also interned in that same camp during the war, because I suppose Rumania in the First World War was on the Allied side, and therefore he was an enemy alien in Germany. Anyway, they were interned, but the women, in other words my mother and her mother, my grandmother, were expelled back to England. And then after the First World War, it must have been about 1919 or 1920, something like that, my mother decided she didn't like to live in Manchester, and went back to Germany, and that's where she met my father and they married in 1923. And then of course my mother was thrown out for a second time, in 1939. By then she'd had enough of Germany.

BL: How old were they when they got married?

RM: My father was [consults document], they married on the 5th of August '23, which made my mother 30, and my father was 34. And the story goes that in 1923 - the inflation in Germany was at its height - and the story goes that my grandfather came over, and paid for the wedding reception with a five pound note.

Tape 1: 16 minutes 9 seconds

BL: Where did you live in Berlin?

RM: Oh it was called Brückenstrasse, it's near the Jannowitzbrücke, not far from the Alexanderplatz.

BL: And what sort of area was it, were there many Jews?

RM: Not really, I think Jews were distributed throughout Berlin really. There was one area which was occupied by - by very highly Orthodox Polish Jews, and that was called - there were two streets: Grenadierstrasse and Dragonerstrasse. And they had proper Stiebels there, and I remember my father taking me once. He was - he just wanted to find out what happens there. What's the word - never mind. Anyway we went for a Simchat Torah service there one night, and they went mad, absolutely mad.

BL: Did you go to synagogue at all?

RM: Yes, and that's another interesting aspect. Although religion was not drummed into us at school, nevertheless, as part of our studies, for instance of the Prayer Book, we were

encouraged— our teacher said ‘If you want to know a little bit more about the service and so on, it would be nice if you could go to synagogue on the Shabbat. So I did, and I went, for a time I went quite regularly on my own, and that was before I even was Bar Mitzvahd.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 6 seconds

And then one day things at my father’s business— I mean, first of all, he was ailing, and secondly, things were becoming more and more difficult, and we had to rely on our own resources, for instance, to deliver cigarettes all over the place, and one day my parents— it must have hurt them terribly, one day my parents turned around to me, and said ‘Look, we have to deliver all these parcels to different people round about Berlin, you’ll have to stay away from synagogue and help us with the business, and I remember I must have been— it was before I was Bar Mitzvahd, I must have been eleven or twelve, and instead of going to synagogue, I went on my bike and cycled all over Berlin to help my parents. I’m sure that wasn’t easy for them, but there you are.

BL: Which synagogue did you go to?

RM: In a place called Kaiserstrasse, but that isn’t there any more. That particular area was completely destroyed.

BL: You said you were Bar Mitzvahd in Berlin?

RM: Ja.

BL: Can you describe your Bar Mitzvah?

RM: Yes that’s also an interesting story, because my parents were married in the Oranienburgerstrasse, the big synagogue, and when it came when I was about eleven or twelve, and the topic was my Bar Mitzvah, my parents wanted me to be Bar Mitzvahd in the Oranienburgerstrasse in the synagogue, and then they decided that I should have private lessons, and my Torah portion was fixed, it was Emor, and I had a private teacher, he was a young Hungarian fellow, and he taught me to read the whole of the sidrah and the haftarah but he taught it to me parrot fashion, I just learnt it by heart, and I only found out in later years that this particular sidrah contains one or two juicy bits, you know. Anyway— but we didn’t spend much time on translation. And then, only perhaps three or four months before the date of my Bar Mitzvah, my parents said to this teacher ‘now we want him to be Bar Mitzvahd in the Oranienburgerstrasse.’ And the teacher turned around and said ‘No, in that case I won’t have anything to do with it’. Why? Because the Oranienburgerstrasse was Liberal and had an organ, and a choir, and he was of the Orthodox persuasion, and he said, No, I won’t have anything to do with the Bar Mitzvah in that case. So in the last resort they had to choose a synagogue on the Kottbusser Ufer it was called, and that was another beautiful synagogue. I mean, all the synagogues in Berlin were really palatial, more like opera houses. So the Bar Mitzvah took place in that synagogue, which has since been destroyed, but the interesting thing is that they had a huge big synagogue, and also a day Shul. And the day Shul is still in existence, and I visited it when I went back to Berlin recently.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 59 seconds

So I said my sidrah parrot fashion, everybody was very impressed, but the moment I treasure most was when they called up my father, and I remember standing to him, and just about being able to control my emotions, you know. Because by then he was a very sick man. He'd been operated and he'd already lost one kidney.

BL: What did he have?

RM: Well, kidney trouble. And he was a very sick man by then. I was Bar Mitzvahd when I was thirteen, it was 1937, that was two years before he died.

BL: Was there any celebration? Was there a party?

RM: Well, certainly not on the scale you know here nowadays. I remember we went home, we invited our neighbours, there were two Jewish families living above us, in the flat: we invited them. I think there were no more than ten people round the table. There was no family, I mean in those days it was unknown for people to travel from this country to Berlin just to attend a Bar Mitzvah. And I remember my main present, one of my main presents was a fountain pen, and another present, which I've still got parts of at home, was a box full of tools for— you know, a pair of pliers, a hacksaw, screwdrivers and that sort of thing, all in a box. And that turned out to be a most useful present. And that's it.

BL: And by then, in 1937, did you experience directly anti-semitism?

RM: Oh, by then yes, yes. Because I was in the Jewish school by then, in the Mittelschule, and I was very happy in that school, very happy indeed, but one or two people kept leaving, quite regularly, to emigrate, Palestine, or wherever. Quite a lot went to South America. As a matter of fact, one of my school pals wrote a poem about all the people in my class. And I remember, I was the typist at the time, I typed the poem, I've still got it at home. And one of the classmates, one of my classmates, was a certain Gerhard Engel. And he left to go— well he left to go to Scandinavia first and eventually he finished off in Australia. And when I went to visit Berlin the second time, which was about twenty years ago, I went at the invitation of the Council, the Berlin City Council, they invited all the ex-scholars of the Jewish schools, and of all the people I have on this list, I only met him, he was the only person I ever met again. Unfortunately he died a few years ago.

BL: So you were saying you did experience anti-semitism outside the school?

RM: Yes. Well, I mean I experienced anti-Semitism in so far that I realised, I gradually came to realise, that my father was working under terribly difficult conditions, my parents rather, and of course it was quite obvious what was going on. As a boy I saw the Reichstag fire, without realising what it would mean to us. I saw the processions by the SA and the SS through the streets, you know, flags flying, and singing their terrible songs. Another aspect of anti-Semitism which I remember quite distinctly was like a stand, where they exhibited the newspapers and the newspaper was *Der Sturmer*, and that newspaper was openly anti-semitic, I mean you only had to look at the caricatures to see how they portrayed Jews, and that was at the corner of our street. So there you are.

BL: You said emigration— people were starting to emigrate, when did you first discuss emigrating with your parents? When did you discuss emigration?

Tape 1: 27 minutes 45 seconds

RM: Well it certainly wasn't discussed with me, because all I knew was that the year before 1937, the year before we finally left, my parents sent me to really get to know my family, and my one uncle who took me under his wings eventually, he was very fond of me and I was very fond of him, and during that summer we sort of got to know each other as a family, and then I went back to Germany, and in August '38, I don't know how it came about, but all I remember is that my parents told me, 'You're going to England'. And bags were packed, and one day, one evening, I found myself on a train for Amsterdam, and the one thing I will never forget - and it's only sunk in in later years, I mean as a boy I felt I was going on an adventure, you know, I was really looking forward to it, I mean a nice long rail journey, and I'd never travelled an awful lot before then - but I shall never forget my father's face when the train pulled out. Never. It will haunt me to my dying day. And that was it, and then I came to England. And at that time, the idea was that my parents would try to follow, but that was by no means certain. I mean it could have easily been the last time I saw my parents. Anyway, as it happened, my parents managed to come out, but they came out in December 1938, three months after me, and just locked up the place, and grabbed whatever they could and came out.

BL: So you came on your own?

RM: I travelled on my own, yes.

BL: Can you describe the journey a bit?

RM: It was a night train which arrived in Amsterdam mid-morning, and my uncle from England had come over to meet me in Amsterdam.

BL: What was his name, please?

RM: My uncle's name was Viktor, Viktor Gruber.

Tape 1: 30 minutes 44 seconds

And then we made our way from Amsterdam to Rotterdam, and we sailed across to - I remember disembarking at Gravesend, Gravesend. And from there we motored up to Manchester in my uncle's car. And that was it.

BL: And what were your first impressions of England?

RM: Well, I knew it a little bit from the previous summer's visit. But in those days, as a fourteen-year-old, I was all very keen on, you know, experiencing things, and I always loved travelling, and this was just a wonderful journey. But it didn't sink in, the whole thing didn't sink in until many years later.

BL: How good was your English, did you speak any English?

RM: Well, I had English at school. I had a very good teacher, a lady teacher, and I had three years of English at school, and the lessons were concentrated mainly on grammar, so grammatically I was pretty good, but what I lacked was vocabulary; and when I came to this country I started reading newspapers and I remember making notes of words I couldn't

understand, and then I went to the Manchester Central Library to get a dictionary - I didn't have enough money to buy one - and learned it that way. And I always liked English, because it was one of my best subjects at school actually. I hated French and never got on with it, but English I was always good at.

BL: So your first impressions of Manchester, what did you think when you got there?

RM: Well, not much, I mean it was a filthy old place, and everything was black, and the fogs, until you saw them, were undescrivable. I remember when I worked already, my uncle had optical practices outside Manchester, he had one in Bolton, one in St Helen's and one in Preston, and I used to travel to these places by train from Manchester, on a weekly rota, but to get to the station I cycled down from where we lived in Devonshire Street, and by then of course the war was on, and blackout and so on, and I remember one evening coming back from town and literally hitting a lamp-post, I couldn't see it, absolutely filthy. And if you blew your nose your handkerchief was black. So the redeeming feature about Manchester, one of the first things I did, as soon as I'd earned a little pocket-money, was to buy myself a second-hand bike, and then I started exploring, and I've been exploring all my life. I started for instance visiting places like Buxton, outside Manchester, I went to places like Southport on the coast, all by bike, I went as far as Liverpool and back, all in one day, and I used to do a trip to see my other uncle who was then living in Birmingham; and whenever the Easter holidays came along, that sort of occasion, I used to cycle to Birmingham, which was a distance of 80 miles and I remember, I used to time myself like a train and if I was five minutes late I used to curse myself. And one memorable occasion - that was the only occasion when I had to give in - I was cycling back from Birmingham, and it happened to be a very windy day. And unfortunately the wind was in the wrong direction, blowing against me. And by the time I got to Stoke-on-Trent, I was absolutely finished. And to make it worse, with a little bit of money I had my pocket, I went into a pub and had a glass of beer, and of course that knocked me out completely; and the next thing I did was find the nearest railway station, and I put the bike on the train, and myself of course, back to Manchester. I was absolutely whacked.

Tape 1: 36 minutes 12 seconds

BL: So when you went to Manchester, was there any idea of you going to school, or-

RM: Yes, when I first came to Manchester, my uncle said right away, at fourteen years of age I wasn't compelled to go to school any more, and I would just have to educate myself, and that is what I did actually. Because as soon as my English improved, I started reading, some of the classics and so on, and I picked up English very quickly.

BL: And you started working for your uncle?

RM: I worked for my uncle, yes.

BL: Can you tell us a bit about what you did?

RM: Well I was a sort of tea-boy, sweeper-upper and so on, but I learnt the practical side of optics, I learned how to adjust a frame, or put in a screw and so on, but I was just a tea-boy sweeper-upper but my uncle employed two opticians, who were called up when I was working for him, so they were short-staffed, of course, so I became a sort of receptionist

really, a glorified receptionist, and I was left in charge of the practices, and just made appointments. My uncle had a rota, he would be in Bolton, say, on Monday, in St Helen's on Tuesday, and in Preston on Wednesday, and that's how it went. I mean, I worked for him, but I never saw him for weeks on end. Because I was in the places where he couldn't be at the time. So – and during that time, while I was sitting in these shops and waiting for people to come in, all I did was keep the place tidy, hand out the occasional finished spectacles, and make appointments. And I had plenty of time on my hands, and that's where I did a lot of reading.

BL: What did you read?

Tape 1: 38 minutes 32 seconds

RM: Well, I can remember reading a lot of travel books – I'm always interested in travel - and I remember reading some of Dostoevsky, what's his famous book, *War and Peace* – is it by Dostoevsky? - And some of the classics, and that helped me along quite a bit.

BL: And did you have any contact to other refugee children, people your age?

RM: Yes. There were people in Manchester: as a matter of fact Yvonne and I, we visited one last night. There were quite a number of refugees my mother's age, and also my age, yes.

BL: And how did you meet them?

RM: Well, word of mouth you know, it got around that people had arrived from Germany and so on.

BL: Did you become part of any clubs, or organisations or–

RM: Not really, no.

BL: Did you go to any synagogue in Manchester?

RM: Yes, but only very occasionally. My grandfather was like my parents, he was very liberally minded, and he only used to go to synagogue when there was a good chazzan, and that's all, he didn't go for religious purposes really, he liked to hear a good chazzan sing.

BL: Which synagogue did they go to?

RM: Oh, in Cheetham Hill Road.

BL: And tell me a bit more about your parents arriving.

RM: Well that was a terrible trip for them. We had a very nice flat, and very nice furniture, and one room was the stock room, where we kept all the cigarettes and cigars and that sort of thing, and it was a three room flat with a very small kitchen and a very small bathroom.

BL: This is in Berlin?

RM: Yes that's right. And the— well, the lounge was a lounge, that was quite nice, and the second room was the business, and the third room was the bedroom. And I— as far as I remember, I always slept in the same room with my parents. Now what their married life was like, don't ask me, I was too naïve at the time, to know. And— but anyway, they just had to lock up the place and decided to come to this country. And at the Dutch-German frontier at Bentheim, they— first of all their passports were taken away from them, then they were searched whether they had any jewellery on them, and whatever there was, they were robbed of, except that my father had some golden cufflinks and he forgot about those during the search, he left them in the shirt, and those were the only ones he managed to save. [turns around to speak to someone off-camera] 'You've got them haven't you?'. And they made them into a brooch.

And the other terrible thing was that in those days you could send ten German Marks abroad. So it was only a matter of three or four months, but my parents regularly sent ten marks to my grandparents for my benefit. Because after all, my grandparents were very poor and had to look after me so every single penny counted. So they sent ten marks every month. And they also sent ten marks for the month of December, during which they emigrated to England. And when— I don't know how the Germans found out, but the Germans found out that ten marks had been sent for that particular month, so they promptly confiscated every single penny they had in their pocket. And they had to travel through Holland, and they had to travel by boat to Harwich, and then from Harwich by train to Manchester, without as much as being able to buy a cup of coffee. And I remember that when they arrived in Manchester, I don't know why I or my grandparents didn't go to meet them, I don't know the details, perhaps we didn't know on which train they were coming, I don't know. But what I do know is that they got into a taxi in Manchester, in Manchester Central Station, and said to the taxi, 'Take us to Devonshire Street, we haven't got any money, you will be paid when we get there'. And this is how they got to Devonshire Street. The first thing they said to my grandfather, 'Have you got any money, whatever the amount was, to pay the taxi driver?' And that is how they arrived in Manchester. That I remember distinctly.

BL: So they didn't have a visa to come to Manchester?

RM: A visa?

Tape 1: 44 minutes 40 seconds

Well the point is that the only reason why they managed to get out was that my mother was British-born and that presumably was stated on the passport. So yes, and the other thing was that they had a letter in their possession, from my grandfather, saying that they - the grandparents - were going to celebrate their Golden Wedding, would my parents please come across for the Golden Wedding celebration. Now whether that was true or not, quite frankly I don't know. It might have been true, but anyway, my grandfather wrote this letter, I've still got it somewhere at home and it was countersigned by the— by one of the synagogues in Manchester. Because the Germans were only happy if they had a letter with a stamp on it, it had to have a stamp on it. Anyway, they produced that letter to the German authorities and apparently that was good enough to let my father out, well, to let my parents out. And the other thing was that the British couldn't refuse my father to enter, even though he had a Rumanian passport, and couldn't refuse my mother to enter, that's the important point, because my mother was British-born, and that fact was stated on her passport, and that was

why my parents, both of them, could come in. If my mother hadn't been British-born, they would have never been able to come to England.

Tape 1: 46 minutes 41 seconds

BL: And what was it like for your parents to settle in Manchester?

RM: Well, it was a terrible time. Because my father, he was a totally broken man by then, and he only— he realised there was no future for him, because his education was very sketchy anyway, and he'd mastered German, yes, but he didn't know a word of English, he was fifty years of age, he had no profession, I mean he was described as a '*Kaufmann*', which could mean anything, you know, no profession, so in other words, no money, no family to talk of, he didn't have his own family, he had my mother and her family, and I mean his prospects were absolutely nil, and in any case he was an ailing man, when he came across, so between December and April of the following year, he was in and out of hospital and that was it. Apparently after they were searched on the way out at Bentheim in the train, and robbed of whatever little they had, he just broke down completely. My mother was always the strong one. She coped with it reasonably well.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 32 seconds

BL: You said before that your mother trained professionally before emigration.

RM: Well, except that she was— I mean she was fluent in English and German, and she— and before she married she worked as a translator and shorthand typist, and then of course she went to evening classes in Berlin to learn how to sew corsets.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 56 seconds

And that saved her, because the minute she arrived in Manchester, we got a sign made, which we put in the window, and one or two people came along, and it caught on, and she managed to earn her own living, anyway.

BL: When she did the course in Germany, that was already—

RM: No she didn't do that in Germany, she learned, she went to a night school or something to learn how to make corsets, but she didn't start using her knowledge until she came to England.

BL: But was it already in preparation?

RM: Oh yes, she knew she had to do something, and she obviously knew that my father couldn't be relied upon to provide anything, so there we are.

BL: So she made the corsets at home?

RM: Yes, that's right.

BL: And customers came to the flat?

RM: Yes, that's right.

BL: And did you live together, did you live with your grandparents?

RM: Oh we all lived in the one house in Devonshire Street. There were five of us, my grandparents, my parents, and myself. I don't know how many bedrooms there were. There was one main bedroom and two tiny ones, and we somehow made do.

BL: And what happened to you at the time of internment?

RM: When my father died in '39, in March '39, no April '39, my mother had two options, she could either remain Rumanian, and that included me, or she could reclaim her nationality, get herself re-naturalised and become British. And she opted for that option, and so overnight we were British. But of course what she didn't perhaps anticipate at the time was that I would be subject to conscription, and that is what happened, of course. I was conscripted into the army in 1943 when I was 19.

Tape 1: 51 minutes 32 seconds

BL: So you had a rare situation where you actually had a British passport.

RM: Yes.

BL: When most refugees from Germany at that time didn't have British papers.

RM: From what I know, I mean, those who weren't British were interned in the Isle of Man.

BL: Can you tell us about your time in the army?

RM: Well, that's a long story. I've— I've written my memoirs actually. [turns off-camera] I don't know whether you've started reading them, Eve. [turns back] Anyway, I was conscripted, and I was a healthy young fellow at the time, I'm still healthy, thank God. And I was declared fit, A1, and of course was put in the infantry. And I remember being called up to report at Carlisle Castle, and I left Manchester on a miserable rainy day, to travel up to Carlisle and was met by the proverbial Sergeant Major, and we marched to Carlisle Castle, were given uniforms, and had to send our civilian clothes home, and that was about the worst— that started about the worst six months I've ever had in my life, because I was thrown together into an environment which was totally strange to me, I was really the odd one out. The other fellows— we were in dormitories holding about 20 people, and they did all sorts of things to my bed, you know, made a mess of it so that I had to sort it out. I couldn't communicate with them in any shape or form really, not because of language, but because they were— you know the football hooligans you see running around nowadays, that was the type of person I was thrown in with.

Tape 1: 53 minutes 58 seconds

And there was nothing I could do about it. How could I possibly say—? I mean, I couldn't run away, and if I had complained it would have made matters worse. So I just had to grin and bear it. But after about six months' training, I went to Egypt, not knowing where I was going at the time, all I knew was that I was put on board a troop ship and eventually we landed in

Egypt, and from then onwards I met some better-type young people, I found quite a number of people I could be friendly with, and I learned the meaning of comradeship by then, you know, and from Egypt, as I say it's a very long story— In Egypt I was very lucky to develop a septic toe, because the boots I was given in England were comfortable in England, but in the hot climate my feet swelled up in those boots and I developed a septic toe. It put me in hospital, and I was very fortunate it did, because the people in the unit I was with, during that time I was in hospital, were shipped out to Italy and took part in the landing at Salerno. I don't know whether that means anything to you. It was one of the landings in Italy, Anzio was another one, and the casualties they suffered were terrible, anyway, instead of being amongst that lot, I was in hospital, thank God. And I was visited one day by a Jewish Chaplain, and we were talking generally, and it happened to be before Pesach. And he quite kindly said to me 'Would you like to go to Palestine? I said 'Yes, please'. And I went. I went to Palestine for a fortnight, I looked up some very distant family of my mother's and I spent a wonderful fortnight there. I remember travelling out from Egypt by train. You could go across the Sinai Desert by train at the time. And I remember arriving at Gaza, and I knew I was going to see these people in Tel Aviv, and I thought to myself suddenly 'Well, I haven't got anything to bring these people, what can I bring them?' What do you think I did? I bought half a dozen oranges, and brought that to them.

Tape 1: 57 minutes 17 seconds

Anyway, then coming back from Palestine I joined a convoy, at this time by truck, across the Sinai Desert to Ismailiya, and went back to the transit camp in Egypt. And these two journeys, the outward journey by train across the desert during the night, and then back, by truck this time, were unforgettable. I'd never really seen a desert until then. And then eventually I found my way back to the transit camp in Egypt, and was put on a troop ship again, at Port Said, and went to Taranto in Italy, and then the idea— I was still in an infantry unit, and then the idea was that I would eventually be up at the front, you know, in the war in Italy.

Tape 1: 58 minutes 25 seconds

BL: Sorry, I have to stop you, we have to change tapes.

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE 2

BL: We were talking about your time in Egypt.

RM: Ja. Well after Egypt I went to Italy, Taranto, and that was the first time I landed again on the mainland of Europe, and I felt very conscious of it at the time. And as I've said in my memoirs, we happened to be passing a railway siding, and there were some German goods wagons on the line, and one of them had 'Berlin' written on it, and it really made me feel good that I was back.

BL: I have to ask you something about your name. Did you change your name?

RM: No. I only changed my name after I came out of the army. Because I realised by then that I wouldn't be able to join a profession or so with my present name, and I would be

typecast. If I mentioned my name to anybody, if I said 'My name is Rudolf Rosenberg', it's like saying I'm born in Berlin and I'm not British. Right.

BL: So in the army did you experience any antagonism towards you as a German Jewish—

RM: No. They called me Rosie, Rosie, and no, I didn't. No.

BL: Did people know that you spoke German?

RM: Well, I tried to point out that I spoke German to some of my company commanders, and they kept saying— they always tried to be very helpful, but it didn't do anything in the end, and I pointed out to them that I am fluent in German and whether that might come useful in some other parts of the army rather than the infantry. Because I wanted to get out of the infantry for obvious reasons, I wasn't the sort of fellow who was chasing medals, you know. So— but nothing happened until the end of the war, when I was in Italy, I was in Italy when the war in Europe finished, in the area just south of Bologna, and from there the unit I was with was ordered to go into Austria. And we travelled across the Alps, a beautiful journey, I always made sure I was at the back of the truck so I could always know where we were going, fantastic journey, and I remember coming through a place called Klagenfurt in Austria, and we were the first British troops in that part, and all the houses were shuttered, and doors tightly closed and so on, people were nervous, of course, they hadn't had any experience of British troops, they may have heard some terrible stories about Russian troops and what they did, so obviously they were nervous and kept themselves indoors. But there was one particular incident I remember when we drove through Klagenfurt, on one of the walls, in big letters: '*Und nun erst recht, Heil Hitler*'.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 48 seconds

So, in other words, there were still some defiant people about. Anyway we travelled into Austria, and we were met by streams of refugees; I remember one poor woman carrying her child and begging for food and that's when I started using my German, of course. Oh yes, by then, all of a sudden the officers noticed that I can speak German and they made use of me, as an interpreter. So I had a little bit of contact with the local population, although we were told not to fraternise. But anyway, to cut a long story short, eventually I was transferred into the Intelligence Corps and I found myself in a small place called Feldbach which is near Graz, and the idea was that we should take over local records, records of civil servants like police, teachers, pen-pushers, and find out whether there were any Nazis amongst them. And the point was that all these people were automatically sacked by the military government at the end of the war and they had to reapply for their positions, so teachers and civil servants had to give their background from the political angle, to make sure that they were fit to be employed, to make sure that there were no war criminals among them.

Tape 2: 5 minutes 55 seconds

Now in theory that sounds a very good idea, but in practice it never worked out because they invariably found themselves back in their old job, and that was it. Anyway, it was an excuse for me to have an office with about three or four people under me, and it made me sound very important although I wasn't, and we had weekly meetings at the Headquarters for the particular area I was stationed in, and the officer in charge there, he was very kind to me and he eventually gave me a very good reference. Anyway the point is that I spent two years,

before I was discharged, two years in peacetime after the war, in Austria. And they were absolutely fantastic years because I was promoted Sergeant by then, and I lived in a wonderful billet in the centre of Feldbach, and I had a cook assigned to me, and her daughter played the cleaning lady, and it was a wonderful life. And I also met my first love there, and we travelled around Austria; I had a jeep to myself, and getting petrol was no problem at all. I mean, the local population were still living under terrible conditions. You could get anything for a packet of cigarettes or a bar of soap. And I remember my girlfriend and I, she was very keen on music as well, we travelled regularly to Graz and visited the Opera House. And a couple of tickets would cost us no more than a packet of cigarettes. That's how I spent my last two years. And I wrote my story.

Tape 2: 8 minutes 5 seconds

BL: You said you didn't have that much contact with the local population.

RM: I had contact with the local population, yes, with local farmers, we were supposed to act as a sounding board. The Russian zone was only about ten kilometres away from where I was, and of course by that time the Russians started to keep themselves to themselves, there was very little contact between the Russian and the British troops. That was really the beginning of the Cold War. And so we were supposed to see whether there were any large-scale troop movements, but in reality we didn't really learn a lot, I mean, the Russians weren't fools: if they wanted to bring reinforcements to the frontier they wouldn't oblige by making it known to us, you know. And I became— I was supposed to research records of people who had been in government positions, and of course I had to work with the local Austrian police, and I made friends with police inspectors and that sort of thing, and all I can remember is that we spent more time socially than doing anything else. I was regularly invited to outings by the police to farmers, to entertain us with wine and they used to kill a pig and big chunks of bread and butter and all the rest of it and we lived like lords.

BL: Did they know you were Jewish? Did you tell them?

RM: I think --- I don't know whether they did. No. No. It didn't come into it really. And apart from this one incident in Klagenfurt I never noticed any anti-British feeling. I think the local population realised that we were, you know, civilised people and the contact was very, very friendly.

BL: Did you encounter any displaced persons at all?

RM: Yes. Now, there was a trial not so long ago if you remember, one man— oh dear— a Russian, one of the Russian aristocracy in this country was— I forget his name now, he was sued by a British aristocrat because the Russian fellow - I'll think of his name in a minute - accused the British of expediting the surrender of White Russian troops who fought on Hitler's side back into Russia. There were certain people who tried to save these people, because they had to go back to certain death, and that trial resulted in big damages being awarded to the British aristocrat who was supposed to have been responsible for sending these White Russian people back to Russia.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 14 seconds

Tolstoy was his name.

BL: So those –

RM: I remember seeing those poor people literally living under rugs in the fields with their horses, and they were originally transported back into Russia.

BL: And you didn't meet any camp survivors?

RM: I didn't, no. It's interesting that you should ask. While I was in the army, I think I can truly say, and I don't think I mentioned it in my memoirs, I was not aware of concentration camps. That sounds very strange, but I was not aware that they existed. I mean Auschwitz and all that, I only learned of later on.

BL: I think the large DP camps were actually not far, in Bavaria, even though there were a lot of survivors, but probably not in Austria.

RM: I knew that the displaced persons– but I thought they were displaced because the– I mean a lot of the German population fled from the Russian advance. And found themselves homeless in the Western zone.

BL: So when did you hear of concentration camps?

RM: Well, certainly not while I was in the army. I mean where I went, in that part of Austria, there were no concentration camps, so I never heard of them. Strange, but there you are.

BL: And what happened after your 2 years in Austria?

RM: Well, then I was due for discharge and came back home, back to earth with a bump, because I lived a real a gipsy life in Austria, and then of course I had to pick up the pieces when I went back home.

Tape 2: 14 minutes 15 seconds

BL: Just before we go on, in your memoirs it's mentioned you were in Greece as well, can you tell me about that?

RM: Ah, well, Greece came about, that was at the end of 1944, the war finished in 1945. By then the Balkans had been more or less liberated from the Germans, the Germans had retreated, and the Russians were advancing from the East. In Greece two factions surfaced. There was the Royalists on one side, and the Communists on the other. And the Communists tried to establish themselves and Churchill wouldn't have it, and actually Churchill came in person to Greece and he appointed an archbishop as a Regent and we were– the unit I was with, we were transferred from Italy to Greece, at very short notice, to support the Royalists. Because there was fighting, there was the beginning of the civil war in Athens and the rest of Greece.

BL: Were you stationed in Athens?

RM: I was stationed in Athens, yes. And it's there that I heard of Roosevelt's death.

BL: So from when to when did you stay in Athens?

RM: From— it was the end of 1944, as I say, the Germans in the Balkans had by then retreated, and I stayed in Athens until February /March 1945 and by the time we went back to Italy the front in Italy was collapsing, you see, and then we went to Austria. There's just one thing perhaps I ought to mention in relation to my army service, because I consider myself one of the luckiest people alive, I really do. I was in a unit which was stationed near some defensive line, I forget the name of it now, and we were due to go— in an infantry unit, you see, and I was a signaller at the time, I used to walk around with a radio on my back. And we were supposed to join the fight in— south of Bologna, and I was stationed in a forward area, under canvas and we handled hand grenades and all the rest of the paraphernalia, and we were due to go into action in two or three days' time. We were so near the front, I remember shells whistling above us, you know, and a month before that, I'd put down for a signals course, and any course that was going, I'd put my name down for, because it meant I would be out of the front line. And, as I say, I was there, ready to go into action within the next day or so, when somebody came and said 'you're wanted at company head office.' And they said to me, 'right, pack your kit, you're going back to Naples on a signals course'. So I went back to Naples when the rest of my unit went into action, and this signals course lasted about six weeks, something like that, and then I was posted to go back to my original unit and by then I found out— I met one or two of my old pals, and by then I found out that the unit I would have been in had suffered terrible casualties, and I was out of it, so that's why I call myself one of the luckiest people alive.

Tape 2: 19 minutes 0 second

BL: I wanted to ask you, your girlfriend in Austria, was she also in the British army?

RM: My girlfriend? Oh no, she was a local, a local girl, yes. There again, she— the house I was living in, the owner of the house occupied a couple of the back rooms there, and of course accommodation was terribly short in those days, and this girl came along, I don't know how she came to Feldbach, she didn't have many family ties, but she was a very well educated girl, good-looking girl, and she had apparently been allocated a room which this owner of the property had spare, so she lived in a tiny little room, a bedsitter you might call it, there was just enough room for a bed, and perhaps a table and a chair, and she came into my office - because I occupied the rest of the house - she came into my office, and said, could she put a suitcase down for the time being while she collects the rest of her luggage from the station. So, 'yes' I said, 'leave it there', and then with that she disappeared again, and then she came back with another suitcase and she'd [sic] occupied this room, and then once she'd gone out I kicked myself, I thought to myself, why didn't I offer to take the suitcase up the stairs, you know. Anyway, eventually I got over my shyness and we got to know each other, and as I say she made life worth living, you know, fantastic.

Tape 2: 21 minutes 8 seconds

BL: Let's come back to England again.

RM: Yes.

BL: So what happened when you came back?

RM: Well my mother had by then moved from Manchester to London, and, well, I mean, she'd established herself, I don't know whether she was still doing corsets or not, I think she was, yes. And she'd moved in with a very old friend of hers whom she knew from Berlin. So the two women occupied a flat near Baker Street actually and that's where I came home to and by then my mother had decided that she wanted to buy her own house. And she bought a house in Golders Green and we moved into that house. And then of course I picked up the pieces and I went to evening classes at the Northampton Polytechnic to study optics. You could do that in those days. It was a three year course and now, do you want to know from then onwards?

BL: Yes.

RM: Well during that time my mother went back to Manchester occasionally to visit friends. And in Manchester she was friendly with a family who had a daughter in Holland. And this daughter came over, she came over from Holland to Manchester. It was her first holiday after the war, and how did it come about, now? My mother visited these Manchester friends, and while she was there, she said to this young lady what are you going to do next? So she said she wanted to go to London. And my mother said, where are you going to stay? And she said, well, I've got a girlfriend I can stay with in London. And my mother then said, well, you are very welcome to stay with me.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 30 seconds

Ulterior motives, of course. And that's how I got to know my wife. And she, in other words, I got to know— my mother got to know her before I got to know her. Which is very unusual. And then she actually came to stay in my mother's house, and I remember going into her room one morning, bringing her orange juice, and we started talking, and it transpired she liked photography, and she was very keen on music, she was going to go to Covent Garden while she was in London. And then we decided we would write to each other. Shortly after that I went on a holiday with another very old friend of mine. We went to Cornwall and I remember sending her a postcard, and addressing it 'Dear Miss Heimans. I mean we weren't even on Christian name terms, you know. And anyway that started off a correspondence and eventually I went over to Holland and we shared a holiday together and then I can't remember the exact sequence, but we decided to write to each other, that was the important thing, and we carried on a very lengthy correspondence, and I remember my mother reading the first letters I received, you know. And I used to show the letters to my mother but that didn't last very long, because the letters became more and more intimate. Anyway, to cut a long story short, I went to Holland one day over Hanukkah, and then she came back to this country for a visit in May or June, something like that. And by the following Hanukkah we were engaged, and I went to Holland for the engagement party, and— no, I've got this wrong. No, we were engaged in the summer, and by Hanukkah, it was Christmas Day actually, we were married. And we only met three times during our courtship. And it lasted for fifty years.

Tape 2: 26 minutes 18 seconds

BL: How had she survived?

RM: How did she survive?

BL: Yes.

RM: There was a Jewish underground organisation who organised places of safety, you know. I mean, the Dutch Gentiles were— there were exceptions of course; but on the whole the Dutch Gentiles were very anti-German and they were very eager to help Jews, and so addresses were found where people could live underground and Herta lived underground for, you know, three years I think.

BL: In Holland?

RM: In Holland, yes.

BL: Was she from Holland?

RM: The family – my parents-in-law, and there were two children - they lived in Essen, and in 19— shortly before the start of the war, they decided to move back to Holland because my father-in-law was Dutch. Very similar situation to my mother being British, you know. Anyway, they moved back to Holland because he was Dutch, thinking that they would be safe, and then of course when Hitler invaded Holland they found themselves in terrible straits. But my father-in-law had four brothers, I think, and they all disappeared. They were all murdered. But he survived and his wife and one or two other members of the family.

BL: Which year did you get married?

Tape 2: 28 minutes 16 seconds

RM: The 25th of December, when was it, 1949, that's right, yes.

BL: Can you describe the wedding?

RM: The wedding, yes. It was a traditional Jewish wedding, the synagogue in Enschede was a replica really of the synagogue in Essen. A very nice synagogue. It was an Orthodox service and, well, we had a family dinner and friends were invited afterwards, that's it, it wasn't very special.

BL: And where was it?

RM: In Enschede. It's a town very near the German border.

Tape 2: 29 minutes 13 seconds

And we went on our honeymoon to Nice and flew back to England and we spent the first five years of our life living with my mother, which was not easy. It was easier for me than it was for Herta, obviously. But it was a very difficult time because we were financially dependent on my mother and I couldn't afford at the time to buy a house, and I was still a student, I only qualified in— it must have been 1953 or something, and it was a very hard time and Herta went out to sew men's shirts, she worked for a fellow who was a shirtmaker, and then eventually I qualified and I worked for an optician in London who was a terribly bad boss, and then in my weekly trade paper one day I saw an advert, a multiple firm was asking for an optician for South Wales. And it was a big firm and I thought to myself, well this might be it. So I applied and got the job, and I could choose whether I would like to go to Newport,

Cardiff, or Swansea, and Cardiff being the bigger place and the bigger Jewish community, I plumped for Cardiff, thank God, and what did I want to say— ja, oh yes, and before I— the big attraction was that if I went to any of those places, I would have a house provided. And that of course was the thing that really attracted me, because it would be for the first time that we would have a roof to ourselves. So— but then they first of all took me on, and I worked for a time in Wembley, in their branch in Wembley, and the branch manager there was a wonderful fellow, I got on with him like a house on fire, and he put in a very good word for me I think, with the result that when we went to Cardiff, it was soon after taking up my job in Cardiff that I was promoted to branch manager, so I had a good, secure job. But then, this is the other interesting thing about my life, we always thought, you know, alright, I've got this job, but it's not what we really want as a final solution. I want to be on my own and practise on my own. So one day Herta took the kids to Victoria Park, [speaks off-camera] I don't know whether you remember, [turns back] and looking out of the bus, she saw a shop vacant on one of the busy roads in Cardiff and so we decided, I think, more or less there and then that we should bite the bullet and go into business on our own.

Tape 2: 33 minutes 12 seconds

So it meant that I had to give up not only my secure job but also the house we were living in, and it meant finding a house, it meant doing the shop up, you know, and turning it into a practice, it meant buying equipment, and I had a few savings, and they all went, I mean by the time I actually opened on my own I was literally skint, I didn't have two ha'pennies to rub together. And fortunately, you know, one Monday morning, I opened the door at nine o'clock, and - I've written about it recently actually - and by nine thirty the first client walked in and from then onwards I never looked back.

BL: And when did you open?

RM: I was in practice on my own for twenty six years. Then I sold the business.

BL: And what was it called?

RM: Well under my name, R Montrose. Yes. I was always— I never had any ambitions of branching out, or engaging staff, that sort of thing, I was rather a loner all my life anyway, and I got on very well, I earned all I needed and more, so why should I— why should I take on extra worries, you know, and branch out.

BL: And what was it like to move from London to Wales?

RM: It was— we got used to it, it was very nice really, because Cardiff being a small community you got to know people very quickly. We soon picked up friends quite quickly and it was a lovely place to live, it was really beautiful, even in those days.

BL: What sort of friends did you make, what sort of circles did you mix in?

RM: Mainly Jewish. Yes.

BL: Were there any other refugees?

RM: Not necessarily, quite a lot of them were British Jews. We knew one or two refugees but mainly, it was sort of half/ half.

BL: Did many refugees settle in South Wales?

RM: Oh yes, yes, because South Wales was an area which attracted quite a lot of German and Continental Jews because immediately after the war there was an unemployment problem, and these German Jews, they had lots of expertise. There was one family we were friendly with, they were in the embroidery business for instance, which was a completely new industry in South Wales, they re-established themselves very nicely and they got good grants to establish their factories and other people went in for making zips, and who else was there?

BL: O.P. Chocolates?

RM: That's right, O.P. Chocolates, that's right, and they all prospered, they did very well indeed, they did very well.

BL: Did they have their own community or did they mix with other Germans?

RM: The German refugees they tended to be Reform, and shortly before we came to Cardiff they established what they called the Cardiff New Synagogue at the time, and now it's called the Cardiff Reform Synagogue and the Rabbi was a refugee from Berlin.

BL: And what was his name?

RM: Graf, Rabbi Graf.

BL: And this community was founded by German Jews? The New Synagogue?

RM: Yes. Oh yes, it was founded by refugees, yes.

BL: In which year?

RM: It must have been about three or four years before we joined.

BL: In the fifties?

RM: Yes. That's right. The— all the refugees, say it must have been about fifteen or twenty people got together one night, met in a hotel, and decided to start a synagogue. Actually in those days there were two Orthodox synagogues in Cardiff, but the Rabbi was a very bigoted type and there was a lot of friction for quite a number of years between the Orthodox and the Reform, but that sorted itself out and now we're very, very friendly to each other.

BL: So was the Reform Synagogue similar to what you'd known from Germany?

RM: Yes. In so far that there was an organ, and men and women sat together, yes.

BL: And probably the uses of Lewandowski and—

RM: Yes, yes, familiar melodies, yes.

B: And they still do today?

RM: Yes. But unfortunately I think we've seen the last of our organist, he's been with us for almost fifty years. He broke his leg and he's out of action now. So the chances are we'll have to do without an organist in the future.

Tape 2: 39 minutes 13 seconds

BL: How would you describe yourself in terms of your identity?

RM: I feel Jewish, but not in a religious way. I'm afraid I've become completely irreligious but I wouldn't deny my Judaism. To me it's belonging to something, or mixing with people of similar background. And I'm comfortable in the company of those people, but it's got nothing at all to do with religion. To my mind, there's too much hypocrisy attached to it. And when I think back to the sort of life my parents lived, you know, I can't help thinking that if there had been a compassionate God, they wouldn't have lived the life they did. So that's my attitude.

BL: How do you think your experiences have shaped your life, your refugee experiences?

RM: Well there again if somebody asks me, 'how do you feel as a result of your army service and so on' Well, I'm glad to be British, but I'm not fanatic in any way about it. I don't go about waving the flag or anything like that. It's only recently that I joined the marches of the ex-servicemen. I always felt that Gentiles and Jews fought together and why can't they march together at memorial parades? But, anyway, I've been talked into marching now, OK. I would— I always call myself a citizen of the world with a British passport. I'm not nationalistically inclined in any way. I'm not particularly— I mean I'm glad that Israel has been founded, but I'm not a Zionist at heart, because to me it's just another expression of nationalism, and I think nationalism has done so much harm in this world I don't go along with it.

Tape 2: 42 minutes 5 seconds

BL: Speaking of nationalism, do you feel Welsh in any way, after fifty years in South Wales?

RM: I love Wales, oh yes, I love it, but I wouldn't fly the Welsh flag, you know. To me Wales is a fantastically beautiful country, part of the country, beautiful, and Cardiff is a wonderful place to live, but that's where it finishes, I mean, I'm not a nationalist in any way.

BL: Do you think the German Jews were well received in Wales? Do you think their experience was different from—

RM: Oh yes, they established themselves very well, yes. But what I have noticed over the years is that there is something between the continental Jews and the English Jews which somehow doesn't mix. We've got a certain background and the English Jews have got a certain background. And I mustn't generalise but on the whole I must say the English Jews haven't got the faintest about what went on on the Continent. And I don't think, again I mustn't generalise but they're not terribly interested either. Ok? On the whole. There are exceptions, obviously.

BL: Do you think your life would have been very different if you hadn't been forced to emigrate?

RM: My life in Germany? Well I mean it would have been different, yes of course. Germany again, to my mind, was a fantastic country to live in. It was a highly cultured country and how the people living in Germany could ever sink so low, I will never understand. But it was a wonderful country and I would have liked to have lived my life there, yes.

BL: You mentioned you went back to Berlin, can you tell us a bit about it?

RM: Well, I went back three times by now. First I went back because I wanted to see what the place was like and I wanted to visit where I lived and all the rest of it. And it was at the time when the Wall was still up. And of course it was very interesting to see both sides of the Wall. And then the second time I went back by invitation of the Berlin City Council, that's where I met my one remaining school pal, and the third time was quite recently, eighteen months ago, when my lady friend and I went, she wanted very much to see where I came from and it didn't take a lot of persuasion, that's right, and we went back not only Berlin but also Warsaw and Krakow, and what I saw there was most interesting, and I visited Auschwitz, and that made a terrific impression.

Tape 2: 45 minutes 53 seconds

BL: and what was it like to go back to Berlin for the first time?

RM: Well it was a very emotional experience, of course, and in those days, when I went back the first time, the original house where we lived was still standing, and I literally walked up to our front door, but I didn't have the courage to ring the bell and go inside, you know, I didn't know what sort of reception I might get. And I visited my old school, of course, and the synagogues and so on and so on. The main impression I came back with was that— to use the words of— what was the name of that Rabbi, Hugo Gryn, it was a question of chasing shadows, literally, because there was nothing, nobody left whom I would have known; by then, anybody left I might have known would have died anyway. So it was interesting to go back and I'm glad I did, but I would never go back to live because too many bad memories.

BL: What's the most important part of your continental background?

RM: The most important? Well, the lack of [indistinct], shall we say, I mean you could ask, what if I had been born in the wilds of Africa, so it's a question of— if you're lucky enough to be born in a place like Berlin or Germany, you're lucky enough to benefit by all the cultural environment, not only cultural environment, the beauty of the countries and the beauties of the cities and the institutions and so on, so one has to consider oneself lucky where one was born.

BL: Is the past something you talk about with your children at all?

RM: Oh yes, yes, I think so.

BL: Is there any topic which we haven't discussed which you would like to add?

RM: No. I don't —

BL: Then my last question would be, do you have a message based on your experiences which you'd like to convey?

RM: Well, I mean, the main message - and I'm glad that my grand-daughter, Yvonne, near me, is taking it up - my main message is peace, it is absolutely essential. Having been through the war and so on, I promised myself I would never join anything to do with militaristic connections, and that's why I wasn't terribly keen on marching on parades and so on, because anything with militaristic connections is complete anathema to me, I can't stand it. I'm not a pacifist, I know that there are occasions when you have to fight, but it doesn't have to be with guns, I mean, you know, you can fight intellectually, you can exchange your ideas and hope other people will come round to your point of view.

Tape 2: 49 minutes 46 seconds

BL: Mr Montrose, thank you very much for your time.

RM: Pleasure. I really enjoyed it.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape 2: 50 minutes 20 seconds

Photographs.

1. I would describe it as the proud parents. It was taken when I was one year old, in Berlin. The names? Well, my mother's name is Theresa Rosa Rosenberg, and my father's name was Manole Rosenberg.

2. That was a photo taken at Kindergarten, it was a Jewish Kindergarten, I was very happy there for my formative years, in Berlin. A local park, I can't remember exactly where.

BL: Can you remember the name of the teacher?

RM: Auntie Margot was her name, like Margot Fonteyn.

Tape 2: 51 minutes 41 seconds

This was one of the few occasions when I went on holiday with my father because we never went on holiday as a family; one of the two parents had to always stay behind to look after the business. He's the first person on the left hand side. And I'm in the middle of the front row.

Tape 2: 52 minutes 9 seconds

This is a family photo showing first of all my grandfather and grandmother on the left hand side, and next to my grandfather, standing up, is their eldest son, my Uncle Heiman and their youngest son, my uncle Viktor, and of the ladies, the lady in the middle is Uncle Heiman's wife, and next to her is my mother, with myself, and on my left is the eldest daughter of Uncle Heiman.

BL: Where was it taken?

RM: In Manchester, 1926.

Tape 2: 53 minutes 3 seconds

RM: This picture was taken in a park not far from where we lived, and it shows Martha who was almost a member of our family. She stayed with us for many years, and she was the most loyal person we ever had the pleasure of knowing.

BL: And when was it taken?

RM: In Berlin in 1930.

Tape 2: 53 minutes 32 seconds

This picture was taken when I was in the Volksschule in Berlin, and I'm sitting second on the— second from the left.

Where was it taken?

RM: In Berlin, in 1932.

BL: Do you remember any of the names of the other children?

RM: Well, my teacher was Herr Krebs, but I don't remember any other names.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 4 seconds

This picture was taken in Berlin in 1931, I'm wearing an outfit which my mother made for me and the occasion was my youngest uncle's wedding.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 18 seconds

This picture was taken in Berlin in 1934 at Hanukkah and I was selected from amongst my class to have this picture taken and published in the local Jewish paper.

BL: Were they writing a feature on Hanukkah?

RM: Yes, that's right.

Tape 2: 54 minutes 45 seconds

This was one of the last photos taken in Berlin in January 1938.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 1 second

This was taken in Berlin in 1938 and it shows us on one of our Sunday afternoon outings.

BL: Where was the outing?

RM: Outside Berlin, I can't remember where.

BL: Yes, please.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 21 seconds

This picture is from one of my cycling holidays with friends I got to know at a youth hostel in England. In Cheshire, in 1940.

Tape 2: 55 minutes 43 seconds

This picture was taken in Ismailiya, Egypt, in February 1944 and I was almost 20 years of age then.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 3 seconds

This was taken in February 1945 in Athens, sitting on the ruins of the Parthenon.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 18 seconds

This picture was taken in Austria in February 1946, it shows some of my fellow soldiers.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 35 seconds

This is a picture of my wife Herta and her sister Doris, taken in Holland just before the start of the war.

Tape 2: 56 minutes 47 seconds

This is a picture of my three children, on the occasion of my 80th birthday taken here in London. Their names are Michael, Monica and Yvonne.

Tape 2: 57 minutes 5 seconds

This picture was taken in London on the occasion of my 75th birthday, the people in the picture are Laurence, my daughter-in-law, Michael, my son and Naomi, Yvonne's daughter, myself, David, Yvonne's husband, my late wife, Hannah, Yvonne's daughter, and Daniel, Yvonne's son.

Tape 2: 57 minutes 4 seconds ?

This is a picture of my grandchildren, taken in London about 18 months ago. From left to right: Mark Chapman, Daniel Glas, Owen Chapman, Naomi Glas and Hannah Glas.

BL: Thank you, Mr Montrose, thank you very much again.

RM: OK, my pleasure.

