

IMPORTANT

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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Moritz
Forename:	Doris
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	25 January 1924
Interviewee POB:	Kempen, Germany

Date of Interview:	13 June 2016
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Jana Buresova
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV176
NAME: Doris Moritz
DATE: 13th June, 2016
LOCATION: London, UK
INTERVIEWER: Dr. Jana Buresova

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

The interviewee is Mrs Doris Moritz, on the 13th of June, 2016. And the interview is in London. Mrs Moritz, thank you very much for kindly agreeing to be interviewed for this AJR project, the Refugee Voices. Could you say please when and where you were born?

I was born in Kempen [spells it], near Krefeld, 25th of January, 1924.

And what were your parents' occupations?

My father was a *Viehhändler* [cattle trader].

And your mother?

She was a housewife.

And were they secular or religious?

Sorry?

Were they secular Jewish people or were they religious?

I can't hear you.

Was your family a religious one?

Not a very religious one, no. In fact, I need to elaborate [pause] ...But very consciously Jewish.

And were there any especially good or bad moments in your childhood, at home, that you...

I think my father was taken in by the police at one stage. Very close to the 1939. My father was blind, incidentally.

[0:01:48]

And what happened to him when he was taken by the police? What happened to him?

Oh, he was taken in; he was released quite quickly.

Did this alarm the family? Were you all very worried?

Of course we were worried ...by the Nazis.

And were there any other incidents of that nature?

Not as far as I remember, no.

No. Did your parents discuss with you, the prospect of joining a Kindertransport?

I don't know that, but before I joined the Kindertransport they sent me to Berlin, to the Kaliski Schule [Jüdische Waldschule Kaliski after 1934-1939 when it was closed – formerly Waldschule Kaliski]... to be acclimatised to being away from home. And also get- be in

touch with Jewish people. Because where I lived there were very few. So I was at the Kaliski Schule in Berlin, for about nine months.

And when did you start there... roughly?

Well... I came to this country, I came on the Kindertransport, so it's before ...the 20th of April '39. So eight months or nine months before that I went to Berlin to school.

And... how old were you when you left Germany?

I was fifteen. I came with my sister, incidentally, who was two years younger.

[0:04:04]

And what were your feelings at that time? And what...did your family...?

I have no idea. I don't know actually. [laughs] How do you expect me to remember all that?

But were you nervous, or did you think of it as an adventure?

I can't remember that. I know we were left – from Cologne. We joined the train on Cologne Station.

And were there any problems during the journey?

Not as far as I remember.

Do you have any idea how many children were with you?

I think the train was full as far as I- would think.

When you said goodbye to your parents, did you expect never to see them again, or did you expect to see them?

Do you know, I was fifteen, what do you reckon? [laughs] I just don't know. It's something I- at this stage I don't remember.

Who cared for you once you reached Britain? How were you welcomed?

It was the most fantastic organisation. It was a Refugee Committee in Cambridge, led by Mrs Burkill. If you've done any interviews you know about Mrs Burkill. Do you know anything about Mrs Burkill?

No I don't, I'm afraid.

Well, she was the wife of a Cambridge Don, and looked after all the refugees in Cambridge. We knew before we left Germany, that we were going to stay with a lady called Miss Rickard, who lived in a huge house in Chesterton. She was a maiden lady. Had an companion who ran the show. ...I almost immediately went to the Perse School, Cambridge which was one of the best schools.

And...

Perse: P E R S E.

[0:06:41]

And did you experience any anti-Semitism or any anti-Germany attitudes?

I can't remember that, sorry.

In the school- did you speak any English before you came...?

No, I had no English. In fact, I've got a, oh my God...what do you call it? What do you call it? Oh, dear, don't write that down. ...[inaudible] ...not, yes, certificate at the end of the term that I'm acclimatising to English. I had no English at all, but I learnt quite quickly... as one does.

And how did you get on with the other pupils in the school?

As far as I remember, all right.

Did you have any German friends? Did you speak in German at all?

There was a Refugee Club. I don't know what we did there. We did go to synagogue every week. Because the person who took us in, was very adamant. She was a church-goer, and she was very adamant that we went to synagogue. I can't remember the name of the rabbi. He's quite well known. I've forgotten his name.

And the synagogue was in Cambridge?

Yeah, Thompsons Lane. Now they've got a Reform Synagogue as well, but not in those days.

And do you still speak any German, or have you forgotten?

I don't use it, but I suppose if I had to I would speak German.

So, so you were not converted?

No...no. No, no.

[0:09:01]

No. They didn't try to convert you, as happened in some cases?

In fact, my granddaughter whom you just met, you don't need to put that in, she spent- she did German at university. And she spent a couple of years in Berlin. So there you are.

Did you later struggle to retain a Jewish identity...as a young adult?

No, I don't think so.

No.

I stayed in Cambridge ...during the war, of course. And my parents came two days before war broke out.

So they came to Cambridge? ...That was a narrow escape.

Yeah, my- you see, we lived very close to the Dutch border. My father had ways and means – don't ask me what they were. ...In spite of his blindness.

And how did they cope? Who helped them?

Oh, they coped extremely well. In spite of the fact my father couldn't see, they rented... they were in rented accommodation. And then... they shared a house with somebody else in Cambridge for a while. And after that, they went into a house in the centre of Cambridge and rented out rooms.

And who helped them financially?

They had my father's money. I don't think there was any financial problem.

[0:11:10]

When you left school...

Sorry?

When you left school, when you finished your schooling, what did you do then?

I did a year's secretarial course.

Was that in Cambridge also?

Yes.

Yes.

Cambridge was my first home in this country.

And did you work as a secretary?

Yeah, I suppose I did. At a garden centre, which I would – I think I would appreciate more than I did at that time. But then I decided I'd do some war work. And I became a member of the National Fire Service. Did my war work. And I worked an office in Comberton just outside Cambridge. And I cycled there every morning.

But you later became a teacher?

Ah, well. That was as a result of my ...war work. I was able to have this year training as a teacher, in Aldenham, in Hertfordshire.

And what subject did you teach?

Junior school.

How long did you work as a teacher?

...Well do you know, I can't remember. I started...I, I taught for quite a long time. I just...can't... I'm trying to think. '48. I think I did the course in '48. Then... I got a job in London, in Barnet.

[0:13:53]

Was it the Barnet Girls' School, or?

Hmm?

Where in Barnet?

I don't know where in Barnet. It was a small place at that time. I think it was, I can't remember the name of the school. ...Something church school. Don't write it down because I don't remember. I can't remember

Don't worry. Don't worry. When and where did you meet your husband?

In Cambridge.

And how?

His aunt was living in Cambridge. And... there was a Jewish, very small Jewish Community there, and- at that time; it is big now. Bigger than Cardiff. And... That's where we met. And we were married in...in Cambridge! [laughs] In Thompson Lane Synagogue where we were married. So long ago, I can't remember.

Which year were you...?

Yes, I'm just trying to remember '49. Yeah, '49, 10th of August.

And what was your husband's profession?

He was a Classics- he had studied Classics at Oxford.

But was he teaching in Cambridge?

No, he was teaching in...in... in Cardiff! He had a job- he got a job in Cardiff.

And what was his nationality?

[0:16:23]

German.

German. Did the experience of being in exile, that shared experience, bring you together?

Oh yes. It was a very tragic situation. His parents- his father was a judge in Munich. And he brought my husband and his brother over to this country. And he thought because he was a judge, he would get a pension So he returned to - to Munich. And that was the end of the story.

Ah, yes...

And they were deported. Very, very tragic. While, some of his ex-colleagues came to London. And they all said, "They made tape their eyes in order to make a living."

Yes, it was very difficult.

Very, very difficult.

Yes. Did you feel part of the British academic life?

Oh, I did in... Cardiff. Yes. Because we were very much involved in the academic life. Excuse me, I've got to have a drink. [break]

Have you and your husband shared your experiences with your children?

Good question. [laughs] I have no idea! I don't remember! [laughs] I do not have the slightest idea.

To what extent would you say that your children are interested in your experiences and your life...?

I suppose they were, yeah. I suppose they were. They've also started their own lives, as everybody does.

Do you feel that your background and your husband's has affected them in any way?

I hardly think that it ...it wasn't detrimental to them.

[0:19:16]

In retrospect, do you feel grateful or regretful about living in Britain?

About what?

About growing up and living here in Britain.

Oh, gosh! Nothing but pleasure! I'm delighted! Otherwise I would have been in Auschwitz!

How British do you feel now?

I feel very British. I have no ...longing for Germany.

Have you ever returned to Germany?

Oh yes, we went on holidays.

And... is there anything that you miss about life in Germany?

No! Certainly not. [half laughing]

And do you have a special message for your family or other viewers at all?

My family, they are assimilate- they were born in this country. My son no longer lives in this country. He's in the States. I think they had a pretty good upbringing. ...My daughter's here.

Your son has become a tremendous benefactor...

He has indeed. He's made a lot of money.

Are you proud of that?

No, I'm just delighted... for him! You know, he made the money and has been a benefactor. And there's a picture of him with the Queen... [laughs] when he got his Knighthood.

[0:21:19]

Did you go with him?

Yeah.

How did you feel at that point?

It was a pleasant experience. What else can it be?

And when did he go for his Knighthood?

Sorry?

When was the ceremony, please?

When did my son go to the States?

No, for the ceremony, for his Knighthood?

I'm sorry I can't hear you.

For the ceremony, for his Knighthood?

Well I haven't been to another ceremony before so it was all very new.

No, when was it please?

Oh. When was it. I wonder if it says on that picture over there. I don't... I can't remember. You'll have to look it up. That's something you'll just have to find out.

And what is his profession, please, your son, and his name?

[0:22:22]

He went to the States... I can't even remember which year that was. He went to the States straight after Oxford. He was born in- (Are you putting this down? Don't put that down.) He was born in '52. He's sixty now... Early 70s he went to the States. And went to Chicago as a journalist. And... He worked for Time Magazine. And then...he was sent over to the West Coast. Went to Los Angeles. And then he was constantly being asked to go to San Francisco, so he settled in San Francisco. And he carried on as a journalist, in San Francisco... I don't know what happened after that. How he...got involved. What was the firm?

He was involved with a computing company.

Sorry?

He formed a company.

Is that Sequoia?

Yes.

He was waiting for a job. He was hanging on for a job until it came up. And that was about nine months. And I think he was... almost on his uppers by then, because he was learning. And then once he got this job in Sequoia, it was OK. He was no longer on his uppers. He was earning a living.

And your daughter is a lawyer.

My daughter's a lawyer here!

Yes.

In Wimbledon. Just across the road. She... graduated in Durham. What else? What else do you want to know?

Do your children retain an interest in Jewish life, in Jewish customs?

That's a good question. My son, certainly not. Don't put that down. Although he's got a Jewish wife. An American Jewish wife. I did ask him. Don't put it down! I did ask him- I asked him once, "Have your boys ever been in a synagogue?" And he said, "They might have been to a Bar Mitzvah." So, that's NOT for the record.

[0:25:47]

No they have no religious upbringing. Neither of them believe in it. They're Americans who do what Americans do.

And your daughter?

My daughter's involved with the Wimbledon Synagogue, not very strongly. But she's a member and all her friends are from that synagogue.

From which synagogue?

Wimbledon Reform.

Is that the one by Queensmere Road?

Pardon?

Is that the one near Wimbledon Common?

Good question. I know it's on the right hand side. It's the Reform Synagogue. I don't think it's on Wimbledon Common. It's opposite Wimbledon Common somewhere. You can find that out surely.

I know which one you mean, yes. Are there any other aspects that you would like to mention that we perhaps have not touched upon?

No. I'm settled. I've now been a widow for rather a long time. Since 2003, that's how many years? Thirteen years. ...That was rather horrendous. My husband was going to- (you don't need to put that down) He was having a blood test, and he had problems getting into the car. And I helped him into the car, and he died in the car! On the way to the doctor!

Oh, that must have been a terribly traumatic shock for you!

So...so I've been a widow since January 2003. *C'est la vie.*

How did you fill your days after his death?

Well... I don't know, I suppose life in Cardiff.

Did it make you more religious at all?

No, didn't make me more religious. I mean we have a very small congregation. I belong to the Reform congregation, in Cardiff. It's very small; so is the other. Because everybody else goes to the large centres like London or Leeds and whatever. And it's just life. Whom you know, and whom you meet. Make friends that way.

[0:29:03]

Your husband wrote a number of books as well?

I think he did on mills.

Did they give you any comfort or pride?

That was on his second honeymoon. [laughs] We got married. And as soon as we were married he went to Rome to do his research. I called it his second honeymoon. No, he only wrote- I think he only wrote one book. Some papers.

Do you, or did you keep in touch with any of his academic colleagues?

They've all moved away and of course, with old age. I'm in touch with one couple who were colleagues. I am in touch by phone with a couple of people who are widows. I'm not- I'm driving, but I'm not driving where they live. ...I'm just trying to think. I'm in touch with- Oh gosh, we had two years in Ghana!

When was that?

Have you got a diary there? Wait a minute... '58 to '60. My husband... Oh, he was asked whether he would like to go to Ghana to teach Classics. That was a wonderful change, and I said 'Yes'. You'll have to excuse me...

[Sound break]

That was '58. December '58.

That you went to Ghana.

[0:31:17]

He was asked would he like to teach in Ghana. So we left by boat – oh! dearie me! - from Liverpool... with two small children. I was so seasick I wasn't [laughs] fit for anything... until we passed Gibraltar and the what's it called, what's it called when you get seasick? Anyway once we had passed there, I was fine. Oh yes, this was the funniest thing. I'd never come across any black people, needless to say. And of course the crew was black. And I was in bed with seasickness. And the chap came in and said, "Would you like some chicken soup?" So I thought, what do they know about chicken soup? Anyway, they brought me chicken soup, and I recovered. [both laugh] Penicillin! And I was fine after that. It was a lovely - lovely holiday on the boat. The children were looked after. And ...my daughter used to say she wanted "the egg and the ice cream". I can't remember what Michael wanted. And there we were accommodated in a bungalow. And it was the university campus. Very comfortable.

Where in Ghana please?

Accra.

Accra.

I had learned to drive, luckily. You needed it there; you can't walk. And we had a bungalow, with a steward, and... I was teaching at the primary school there. My husband was teaching of course. And... I think Michael and Claire were at the nursery school. And we made a lot of friends there who unfortunately by now are almost all dead, except for one couple. I send some of them Christmas cards. In the middle of that trip, we were able to come back, and we went to Israel. That was very pleasant. Just for a holiday. Instead of coming back to this country we went to Israel, and then we went back to Ghana for the next lot.

What were your impressions of Israel?

Oh, Israel? Look, it was a couple of weeks. With two small children, come on – forgive me.

But how did you feel as a Jewish person?

My son lost his wickets playing cricket. You don't need to put that down. This was only a couple of weeks. Anyway we went back to Ghana. And then flew back in '70. We didn't come back on the boat, we flew back. And went back into the house in Cardiff, which had been rented out while we were away. And settled there.

Back in Ghana, did it give you a sense of fulfilment to teach the small children there?

[0:35:31]

They were all Europeans.

Ah...

They were all Europeans. They were the academic. The academic, the children of the academics. Black and white.

And ...the students at the university?

They were obviously all black. That was a lovely episode. My husband said, "What are you going to do if it rains?... when you come to Britain?" They said, "Stay in bed, sir." [laughs] You'd stay in bed a lot of the time. I suppose a lot of them came to Britain to further their studies. And we went back to Cardiff.

Did you ever keep in touch with any of the students?

No, only with some of the friends we made. Not with the students, no.

No... And have you returned to Israel?

No. Oh, to Israel?

Yes.

We've been to Israel a couple of times, yes. And I've been on my own too, I think, if I can remember.

In terms of- if we might return to your home background in Germany? Did you observe any of the traditional holidays at all?

Oh, yes. But I can't remember that. I've often tried to remember, you know, quite honestly. But, I don't. And my sister's died and I'm not sure she would have known either.

And in the build-up to the war, what were your memories of that terrible time?

I suppose everybody was ...apprehensive. In fact, the house we were staying with, this lady who put us up, she had a cellar and we- we- they were attacked. The planes were coming over Cambridge. And we went in the cellar...

No, in Germany...

[0:37:51]

Oh, I don't know anything about that. I don't remember about what happened in Germany. I really don't. You know, I told you that I'd... went to Berlin to school, and then I was in Berlin during the Kristallnacht. I know, but I remember very little about that. I was living with a family there and then went to school during the day. I remember very little of that.

But that must have been a very frightening experience?

Yeah, I was away from home! And then, more or less, almost immediately, the Kindertransport was arranged after that.

But the news of the Kristallnacht and the experience must have been very frightening?

Yeah, but I've been trying to think about it but...before you have arrived on the scene, I really remember very little.. There wasn't any television was there? I suppose it was just talked about in the school. And then I went back home very soon afterwards. But we'd been to Berlin, as I mentioned earlier, because my granddaughter was working in Berlin. And we went to look at the premises of the school which... It's in the most beautiful part of Berlin. The school was called '*Die Waldschule*', and I'm not surprised it was, because it was all...country. And they've got a plaque there now, to say how many people were deported and how many people survived. We saw that when we went, yeah.

And you are one of the survivors.

Yes.

That's very important.

Yes, otherwise I wouldn't be talking to you.

No. No, exactly. Exactly. But did you sense the tension of those times? Were you aware of it, or did your parents...?

I must have been. I must have been.

Did your parents try to protect you from it?

No, I can't remember that.

What were your parents' names, please?

My father was called Salli, with an 'I' at the end. And my mother was Luise. L U I S E.

And back home, did you have any grandparents living with you?

They lived in Rheinberg. I think there was only a grandfather. I remember a Seder with him. I was asked if I was comfortable and I said, yes, I had very nice warm feet. That's what I'm told.

So they observed the traditional holidays and Holy Days?

Yes, with my grandfather, yes.

And your sister, what did your sister do?

My sister trained as a pharmacist... in Nottingham.

And did she feel settled here or did she...?

She was settled here but she wasn't a bit interested in Judaism. She was a political animal. She was all for the Labour Party. We didn't see eye to eye. I'm more in touch with my brother-in-law now that she is no longer alive than when she was before. It's very odd.

[0:42:24]

How did your sister respond to being sent on...?

Sorry?

How did your sister respond to being sent on the Kindertransport?

I was always told I had the responsibility for her because she was two years younger. And I don't think that was a very happy relationship. We lived in the same house, we went to the same school. And... in a way, she did rather better than I, because she...she was able to study pharmacy... at Nottingham.

When did she study there?

Well...she's two years younger than I... Whenever she left school. Whenever she left school. When did I leave school? I told you earlier on didn't I? Gosh you really want to... dig in the deepest... but I've got nothing left. ...I left school. Now I'm getting completely mixed up with you asking me about... Ghana and now I've got to go all the way back again.

Was it about '45 or later?

...Something like that.

Yes. Did she... have any yen to go back to Germany at all after the war?

That I don't remember. They went on holiday and I don't remember what they did. We didn't live ...We weren't in that close touch. As I told you earlier, I'm more in touch with my brother-in-law now than I was when she was alive. I think mainly because she was such a great Labour supporter.

When you yourself went back to Germany, was it a painful experience?

No. I had nothing to be painful about. All my family ...were - were free. My, my, my father's sister, was in hiding in Holland all during the war. *Untergetaucht* [gone in hiding].

Who protected her?

Sorry?

Who protected her? Who hid her?

I'm sorry?

Was it a family, or the church... who hid her?

I'm sorry I can't hear you. What did you say?

Who helped your father's sister, your aunt?

[0:46:15]

Oh, well certainly not the church. I don't really know.

And what was your sister's name?

Erika, with a K.

Erika. ...And in terms of your own activities- In terms of your own activities here in Britain, did you belong to any Jewish organisations apart from the synagogue?

I just don't remember that. I mean now I'm quite active in WIZO [Women's International Zionist Organisation]. 'Active' in WIZO. I go to the meetings. What we did before, I don't think so. Not particularly. We belonged to the synagogue in...in Cardiff. My husband was very learned in Jewish matters. Very learned.

Did you discuss a lot of issues?

No, we didn't discuss, but... he gave talks at services and that sort of thing.

And where are your WIZO meetings?

Sorry?

Where are your WIZO meetings?

In peoples' houses.

And what do you do?

There's always a speaker. We've got a very ...active organiser. She always has a speaker. We meet once a fortnight. ...I don't drive in the dark, so I always get a lift.

And what is the subject range of the talks?

Could be anything. You name it, it's there. The last one was... somebody talking about her experiences as - as a Magistrate. There's been one since, but I can't remember what that was.

Does that help you feel part of the Jewish Community?

Oh, yes. Sure - sure.

Yes. And have you ever gone into schools to speak about your experiences?

[0:49:04]

No, I've never been asked. Not like my best friend who's forever talking with the Refugee – whatever it is – Trust. No, I've never been asked.

Would you have been willing?

Well, look. That's water under the bridge. I am not going to talk to anybody anymore. I'm too old for that.

No, not now, but perhaps in...?

Well, how can I tell that? What was...?

Is there anything else that you would like to – to mention? Any particularly happy points in your life?

No, I can't think of that.

Was Ghana a particularly happy time?

Sorry?

Was your time in Ghana a particularly happy time?

Very happy time. Yeah, very happy time! As I told you, we made a lot of friends. Most of them have died by now, but we keep in touch over Christmas with cards, or telephone calls.

Did your husband feel he was contributing something to Ghana?

Well obviously. He went there to teach Classics. Not to Ghana but to the University of Accra. He went to teach Classics, ...which seems a very strange subject in an African country, doesn't it? [laughs] But they obviously wanted it, at that time. I don't know what's happening now. Actually, if you look at Ghana. Ghana is the only country which hasn't had any political problems. All the others have all - I don't know; you look at Nigeria or something like that. Ghana doesn't seem to have had many political problems.

And do you have a wish to return to Israel at all or did you...?

To what?

Did you have a wish to return to Israel at all?

Well, I've been there a couple of times.

Yes, but did you want to remain?

[0:51:26]

Or to live? Oh, god, no. Although my second cousin, she lives in the most wonderful retirement place in Jerusalem. Oh, God, what a place! Where she's completely independent but she can also- she has a lovely flat, and if she wants to eat communally she can do. If she wants to look after herself... Very nice. That's a second cousin, actually.

But you are not tempted to join her?

Oh, gosh, no. Cardiff.

And you will be returning to Cardiff, now?

I retired there, ages ago.

Are there any ...other aspects that you would like to mention at all?

No...I have no longing for Germany. I'm perfectly settled here. I'm fed up with the European question. [laughs] So is everybody else. No. I'm, as far as I can keep going, I'm all right.

Well, I hope that will be for a long time yet.

You don't know. You don't know what's around the corner!

No, but thank you very much indeed for your time today, and for speaking to us. Thank you very much for your time today.

Oh, thank you. There's some lunch there. So come into the kitchen and have some lunch. We made sandwiches yesterday.

Thank you.

[End of interview]

[0:53:40]