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**Interview Transcript Title Page**

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<b>Forename:</b>	Kurt
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<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Jana Buresova
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## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV182  
**NAME:** Kurt Treitel  
**DATE:** 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016  
**LOCATION:** London, UK  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Jana Buresova

**[Part One]**

**[0:00:00]**

*The interviewee today is Mr Kurt Treitel, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2016, in London.*

*Mr Treitel thank you very much for kindly agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices. Could you please kindly tell us your full name, and your place and date of birth?*

My full name is Kurt Max Treitel – T R E I T E L.

*And your date of birth?*

My date of birth is ten... two... ten, April 1922.

*Thank you. And where were your born?*

In Berlin.

*And...*

The house- by the way...not terribly important, but the house in which I was born, is the only house left standing in - in the road in which I was born. So, I, I ...I could look up to where my- my birthplace was. Still there. And the only one. The other houses are all bombed out.

*Do you remember the name of the road?*

Cuxhavener Straße.

*And could you tell us something about your family background? Your father's name.*

My father was called Theodor – Theodore. And he was a lawyer in Berlin. He had his office in Unter der Linden 50. And later on, when the Nazis got into power, he had his office in – in where we lived, in the front room. And that was in Cuxhavener Straße.

*And your mother's name and background?*

**[0:02:41]**

My mother's name was Hanna Levy – L E V Y. And she was obviously Jewish with a name like that. And that's it.

*And when was she born and where?*

She was born in 19... sorry, 1892. 1894.

*Thank you. And where?*

In Berlin.

*In Berlin. And did she have a career or was she a lady at home?*

What?

*Did she have a career or was she a lady who stayed at home?*

I don't...

*Your mother?*

*Mrs. Treitel: Did your mother have a career?*

She had no career other than being a mother and wife.

*Thank you. And did you have any brothers or...?*

I had a brother and a sister. Actually, it was the other way around. I had a sister and then - a brother.

*And what were their names?*

My - my sister ...Zilli, or known as Celia in England. She's in England as well. She's known as Celia, and my brother was known as Guenter. And he's... in Oxford. He's a professor in Oxford.

*Do you have any particular memories of the early – your early days in Berlin before you came to Britain, that were good memories or bad memories?*

**[0:04:37]**

Well, both. Good memories of the family life and the visitors we had, and the members of the family who came to visit stay with us. And... My, my, my brother and sister stayed with my parents, as, as, as I did, of course. And then in March 19...34 I came on a Kindertransport to England with my brother.

*Mrs. Treitel: 1939 you did.*

1939.

*Can we stay in Berlin for a moment? Was your family Orthodox or a non-observant Jewish family?*

Reasonably Orthodox, but not – not very Orthodox. But they kept Jewish holidays.

*And have you retained that belief? Have you kept up your Jewish belief?*

Yes.

*Yes.*

We're members of the synagogue here in Dunstan Road.

*Yes – yes, I shall come back to that. What do you remember of the Nazi times in Berlin, and how it affected- how they affected you...?*

Well, oddly enough it didn't affect me at all, because, as after the war one of my Aryan colleagues, friends, said, to me, "We always regarded you as one of us. You, you weren't like – like, like the other Jews. You were like a member of our class." So apparently, I was regarded as a member of a ...Jewish, non-Jewish school.

*So, your school in Berlin was not a Jewish one?*

No.

*No.*

I never went to a Jewish school in Berlin at all. I mean I could- Oddly enough my brother and sister did, but I never did. I went to an ordinary German school. And then later on, to, to a school with... with ...

**[0:08:00]**

*Mrs. Treitel: He was sent to the American School [so he could learn English].*

Then I went to the American School... in Berlin.

*When did you go- how old were you when you went to the American School?*

I must have about fourteen.

*Mrs. T: Or...fourteen.*

*And the American school as in Berlin?*

In Berlin.

*And did you learn- did you learn English before you...?*

With the exception of German, everything was taught in English, so when I came to England, I spoke fluent English.

*That would have been very helpful.*

It was helpful, but as everybody in England speaks English, it wasn't all that helpful. I only did what everybody else did – speak the language.

*Yes, but it meant that you already knew it. Yes.*

Yes. I already knew it.

*Yes- yes. And was there any anti-Semitism in the American school?*

No, none. In the American school there was no anti-Semitism.

*And when did you come to Britain, in...?*

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March...19...

...39.

1939, yes. Together with my brother.

*And how did you come to Britain?*

On the Kindertransport.

**[0:09:44]**

*How did your parents arrange this? Did they speak to you beforehand?*

Well yes, they, they arranged it- you could arrange that with the *Jüdische Gemeinde*. The Jewish Community. And they then put you on a Kindertransport. And we, we went via Holland.

*And where did you arrive in Britain?*

We arrived in Britain at Waterloo.

*Exceptionally, because it was usually Liverpool Street.*

Usually, they went to Liverpool Street.

*Yes...*

But we went to Waterloo. And when I and my brother went to Waterloo, my uncle was there. He was already here, married to an English Jewish lady. And he said to the committee ladies who were looking after us, "This is my nephew." So, they said, "Would you be willing to guarantee him?" And then, "Please sign here." So, he signed, and then we could go across. And my brother and I went across to my uncle. And we then went off to Lyons Corner House for lunch.

*Was that a special lunch?*

No. I mean the, the, the lunch there cost one and sixpence [1/6d.]



*Mrs. T: I [ ate there] as well. The most popular restaurant.*

*And how did you feel, leaving Germany?*

I felt very happy. I remember about a week before we left, my brother said, "There are only two things which can stop us. K or K. *Krieg oder... Kampf...*"

War or ... the *Kampf...*

K or K. *Krieg oder ...* something or other, I've forgotten.

*Don't worry. Don't worry.*

Anyway... I and my brother then came out and my uncle was on the other side of the table and he said, as I said to you before, he said, "If you're willing to guarantee them, sign here." He signed and then he took us away and we went to Lyons Corner House and had lunch.

*How many other children and young people were on the train? Where did you leave from?*

**[0:12:53]**

We met- we left at Berlin with about 150 children, maybe 200, I don't know. Quite a number. And we were all very happy. Except our parents were standing there waving, you see? But then- well, my father didn't come. He said, "I can't come." But my mother went to the station and she took, saw us- she saw us off! But fortunately, this was in March, and in July she and my father and my sister came as well. So, we were- and my grandmother too. So basically, our family all came out. The immediate family.

*Yes.*

They all came out.

*Where did you- so, did you leave your uncle and go to live with your parents? Where did you live when your parents came to Britain?*

I didn't get that...

*Did you- when you first came to Britain, did you stay with your uncle?*

Yes.

*Yes. And when your parents came...?*

Then I stayed with my parents again.

*And where did you stay, in London or...?*

In London. We were in Golders Green.

*Mrs. T: He had a flat in London. A wife and a baby.*

*And how did your parents cope? What did they live on?*

On the money my uncle gave them.

*Did the Jewish Community help at all?*

Not as far as I know. I mean as far as I know, my uncle supplied my mother with... whatever little money it was, but the money to... keep us going! And then later on I got a job, and I had a job actually. And my father got a job as well, and then we were better off. And then my uncle didn't have to give us any more support.

**[0:15:25]**

*What work did your father do?*

Here or in Germany?

*Here.*

In Germany he was a lawyer. And here he was a... storekeeper.

*How did he feel about that because...*

Pardon?

*How did he feel about that job when he was so well qualified?*

Well, he wasn't qualified here, you see; that's the trouble. But he got used to living as best as he could.

*Did he speak any English before he came?*

No. Not really.

*And your mother?*

No.

*No.*

I mean they learned actually...while... when they were here, but they didn't learn, they didn't speak much English before they came here, unlike me.

*Did you first of all go to school here?*

No.

*No.*

I was too old to go to school. My, my brother went to school. And from school he went to Oxford. And... he's still in Oxford now.

*And what does he do?*

He lectures. He's a Professor of Law. ...In Oxford.

*Yes. As a seventeen-year-old, when were you sent to the Isle of Man? When were you interned?*

When was I sent to the Isle of Man? In 1940.

*And how long were you there?*

I was there from July, till November.

*Do you recall which camp in the Isle...?*

**[0:17:34]**

Hutchinson.

*Hutchinson. And what were your experiences there? Because it was very crowded...*

They weren't interned. My parents were not interned.

*No. How did you- What was your experience in Hutchinson? What were the conditions like?*

Where? On the Isle of Man?

*In - in Hutchinson camp.*

Not bad. I mean, I shared a bed with one other boy and...

*Because it was very, very crowded...*

It was crowded.

*Yes.*

I shared a bed with this boy, and - and two other men. So, there were two boys, me and another boy, and two adults. Two boys, two adults. Four people were in the room.

*How did you get on? Did you argue or did you...?*

No, not too bad.

*Mrs. T: They had a wonderful university there, on the Isle of Man. There was a wonderful university.*

*What were your duties in the camp? Everybody had to do something.*

I, I was in, in, in an office of my own.

*Oh! What did you do?*

What did I do? I handled all the books. We collected books. Basically, that's all I did! And I sat there waiting for people to come. And to bring in the books and take new books away.

*So, it was a library?*

A library yes. And of course, apart from the library, there were also- there were chances to, to borrow books.

**[0:19:44]**

*Yes...yes. And did you study anything there?*

No, not really. I mean yes- they called it study but it wasn't really.

*What was the sort of food you ate? Did you cook separately?*

We had, each house, each house had a cook. And we had a cook as well. He came from Hamburg.

*Was it kosher?*

If you wanted it yes, if not, no. I mean, basically it wasn't kosher. But if you wanted kosher, you could have what they called 'a kosher house'.

*What- was the man who cooked, was he a good cook or were you hungry?*

I think he was a good cook, yes. I mean considering the ingredients he got, he was quite good!

*Because food was rationed.*

I mean... We got the rations. And... And from those rations, he had to cook.

*Mrs. T: And the Jewish Community provided for the High holidays.*

And for the Jewish High holidays, you could, as Renate just said, they provided kosher food. But normally there wasn't any. But there was for special reasons. Special, special occasions. Then we had Doctor Schonfeld coming over there; Rabbi Doctor Schonfeld came over. Made sure we got all the right food for the – for the High holidays. And if I may ask you, I'd like to go to the toilet.

**[0:21:40]**

*Yes.*

*Thank you. You were mentioning that you were in internment on the Isle of Man.*

Yes.

*And have you any idea how many people lived in the house that you were in? Was it a former boarding house?*

Yes, it was a former boarding house. And... in our house there were about forty people.

*And you were visited by Doctor Schoenberg [Schonfeld]?*

Pardon?

*You were visited by Doctor...*

*Mrs. T: Rabbi Doctor...*

*Rabbi Doctor Schonberg [Schonfeld].*

Schonfeld, yes.

*Schonfeld...*

He made sure that, for the Jewish holidays, we had Jewish food. Normally only what they called 'kosher houses' had, but on the Jewish holidays every house got special kosher food.

*And did he come from London, or...?*

I don't recall. Probably not- he probably came from Liverpool. ...I don't think- I don't know where he came from, because... We don't know. We don't know- all we knew it was kosher food.

Yes.

Where it came from, I don't know.

*How did you feel about being interned? How did it take place? Did the police come?*

Well, I didn't feel so bad, but people who were married and had wives and possibly children at home. They - they felt very bad. I mean I didn't feel too bad because... I had regular letters from my parents, who were not interned. And- but on the other hand, I came out fairly quickly, in November. My uncle, who was also interned, didn't come out till the following... spring. He was interned for about... nearly a year.

**[0:24:09]**

*How did it actually take place? Did the police just come to fetch you? Did they give you a warning? Did they send a letter?*

I think in the beginning they didn't know- they, they thought we were... Nazis. But after that when they realised, we were in fact as much if not more against Hitler than they were, they treated us better. But in the beginning they were - we were badly treated and when we were when, when we were first interned, we the... the dear guards who guarded us, were thieves! They stole everything they could. I mean there was no - no doubt about it. As far as they were concerned, we were Nazis, and they took everything away. So, in the beginning we were very short of everything.

*In the Isle of Man?*

No, in...in, in Kempton Park.

*Kempton Park. Oh, you went first to Kempton Park.*

Yes. Yes, I was there. And then on the Isle of Man we were treated better. But in Kempton Park we were badly treated.

*And the conditions were harsh?*

Were harsh, yes.



Yes.

I mean I volunteered for the kitchen, because if you had volunteered for the kitchen, you – you got more to eat. You had more- bigger rations. Because the rations went first to the kitchen staff, and then to the other internees. So, I volunteered [inaudible] for the kitchen. And then of course I had to work there.

Yes.

But on the other had working there wasn't – wasn't that bad, because you got extra food.

**[0:26:29]**

*And where did you sleep in Kempton Park?*

In....in where did I sleep? In... in the stalls.

*In the horse stables?*

Where they- where they normally had the bookies.

*Bookies and the horses.*

Yes.

*Yeah... How were you taken to Kempton Park? Did you go in a police car?*

Well as I said, we were not very well. But once they got...., they realised that we were anti-Nazi, they treated us better. But in the beginning, as far as they were concerned, we were German prisoners of war. And they treated us badly. But that didn't last too long.

*Why were your parents not interned?*

Don't ask me, I don't know.

*No...*

*Mrs. T: My parents weren't either!*

I mean when I was interned my father said, "Can I go along with the boy?" And they said, "Maybe you'll be lucky tomorrow. Today we are full up."

*...Amazing.*

So, my father was never interned.

*Mrs. T: I went with my parents to the police station.*

I mean, I, I was interned, but my father was not interned. My - the reason is I had to- if I would have gone later to the police station in Finchley Road here, I probably wouldn't have been interned. But I thought I'd get it over with, and go early. And if you went early, you were interned!

**[0:28:24]**

*So, they called you to the police station.*

Yes. ...Well, you had to go to the police station.

*That must have been such a shock for you.*

Not really because we, we'd heard of other people being interned. And I mean I did ask the guard, "When do you think they will be sending us home?" He looked at me as though I'd gone mad. [laughs]

*You must have...*

I mean I wasn't interned all that long. I was interned from... July to November. Then I came home. And that was it; I was never interned again.

*In your camp, did you meet any Nazis?*

No, there weren't any; they were all Jews. There must have been some Nazis...

*There were, yes.*

...but I didn't meet them. Not in our house.

*Mrs. T: In September, all the professors were being taken [inaudible].*

I had an uncle who was... married to an English woman. A Jewish woman. And he was interned until the following... spring!

*Yes. Until 1941 – May 1941...*

That's a long time!

*...that most were released...*

And I mean being a married man with a child, this wasn't so easy for him. But I... I was not interned as long. And then... they- they, they did once or twice ask me to come to the police station again. They asked me when I was going to America. I said "I don't know yet." They said, "Well you better make it soon, otherwise you'll go back at the Isle of Man." Oooh... But I mean I never, I never did. But I mean, they threatened you.

**[0:30:27]**

*That must have made you feel very insecure...*

It was a shock, yes.

*Yes.*

Because we, we regarded ourselves as being anti-Nazis. Obviously. I mean, Jews here were glad to be away from it.

*Indeed.*

But the English didn't realise that until much later.

*It's true.*

When they realised it, then they let people go home. But some took a long time.

*Yes. When you were in the Isle of Man...*

Yes.

*...did you feel afraid if Germany invaded Britain so many Jewish people would be in one place?*

We were afraid to some extent, but we, we tried to ignore it. Because we hoped that the English would beat the Germans- would beat the Germans when they tried to land. But they never did! As you know. So, we were not invaded by the Germans when we were there. But had they got there, they wouldn't have had our support, but support of the... local people.

*Did you experience any animosity from local people travelling to the Isle of Man?*

No. No, the local people came and sort of – about this far away - and handed us sandwiches... and supported us.

*You were not spat on?*

No, not, not our camp. Maybe somewhere else they were, but I was not- they were quite friendly. The local... the Manx people were quite friendly.

*And in Liverpool, walking from the train, to the port area...*

Yes...

*... did people shout at you?*

No.

*No...*

They looked away. They didn't, they didn't want to know. Why should they then? As far as they were concerned, they were a load of Nazis being taken away, you see? They didn't know that we were anti-Nazi and Jewish. They - they just saw Germans and...so... they just looked I think some spat at us but not. Mostly they didn't. It's a long time ago now.

**[0:33:39]**

*You must have been very relieved to come back to London...*

Of course!

*...and join your family.*

I mean, I was very happy to be back in London.

*And what did you do then? What happened in your life then?*

Since then?

*After you came back to London.*

Well, I stayed with my parents.

*And did you work... Did you work?*

Yes.

*Yes. And did you study in the evening at all?*

No, I didn't study. I just worked.

*What was your work?*

Pardon?

*[louder] What was your work?*

I ...tailoring.

*And where was that?*

In London, in the West End of London.

*And how long did you do that? How long were you tailoring?*

Oh, about five years.

*And did you enjoy doing that, or did you hate it?*

I didn't particularly, but it was a job. A job where you... got money and you...got... cash. Got cash every Friday.

*Can you remember how much?*

**[0:35:12]**

Not really but I think it was something like ...one...four. About forty shillings or something like that. But in those days that wasn't too bad. And at least it was a job!

Yes.

And then we were supposed to be going to America. And they... were going to give a visa to my father and me. My father said, "I'm not going without my wife and daughter." So, we never went to America. That's why you're talking to me.

*What was the problem with the visa for your mother and sister?*

The problem was that you weren't British. If you were British, it was no problem. But I wasn't British then; I am now.

*When did you start working as an article clerk for the solicitor?*

What?

*When did you start your training as a solicitor?*

When? Oh...When we bought the house I suppose. Yes. In about 1941...

*Mrs. T: Not till ...fifty!*

1960. Renate says 1960...

*Mrs. T: We got married in '55. Moved into this house in '58.*

*So around about then.*

Yes.

Yes.

I mean before that I was always liable to be called up by the police, you see? But once you're British you're not called any more.

*When the police called you to the police station...*

They just asked me, "When are you going?"

*Ah...*

They didn't say, "Would you like to go back to the Isle of Man?" They just said, "When are you going to America?" Because I was released on the condition that I was emigrating to America. And I said, "I don't know yet, but I'll let you know when I am." And they sent me home again.

**[0:37:51]**

*Mrs. T: It was too dangerous to travel on the sea. It was wartime. There were U-boats.*

It was dangerous yes.

*Yes. So how did you come to begin your professional work as a solicitor?*

She said, "You're... too clever just to do that. You'd better- You can study." And so, I studied! And I qualified - eventually.

*And was that in London?*

Yes.

*And with Primhak Solicitors?*

What?

*The name of the solicitor you were with...*

Yes. When did I become a solicitor?



*...was Primhak?*

*Mrs. T: Primhak. You were articed to Primhak.*

Primhak, yes. I was articed to a, to a Jewish solicitor.

*And did you then feel that this was the right pathway for you?*

Yes, but I mean...But that was behind me then. You ignored it. You were looking forward and not backward.

*Did you ever think of returning to Germany after the war?*

My what?

*After the war...*

Yes.

*... had ended, did you or your family ever think of returning to Germany?*

No. I mean as a matter- Only... My father, he said, "*Sie haben mich rausgeschmissen, da gehe ich nicht zurück.*" "They threw me out, so I'm not going back." So, we have been- he was asked to come back and- well, again, as a lawyer. But he said, "They threw me out and I'm not going back." He was quite right. On the other hand, had he gone back he would have had a professional career.

*Yes. Did he resent not being able to work as a lawyer here?*

**[0:40:34]**

I think he did, but he didn't say so. Because here, he was a nobody. Before that, he- as a lawyer, he was somebody.

*Yes.*

But he didn't want to go back. He said, "I'm not going back there."

*Because...*

I mean he had an opportunity to go back to Bavaria, but he didn't want to go back. I mean he went back. He went on holiday to Austria. And he went back across one day, for a one-day trip to...to...Germany. But I mean, not to stay.

*No... no. No, it must have been very difficult for him because his German qualifications were not accepted here.*

Not accepted, no. Well, quite right, they're quite different.

*Yes.*

But I mean he never had any qualifications here, so he couldn't practise in here as a lawyer.

*No... And when did you meet your wife Renate?*

When did I meet her first? When did I first meet you?

*Mrs. T: About a week after the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January. My father...*

*Which year?*

*Mrs. T: 1958... '55! 1955.*

1955.

**[0:42:14]**

*Mrs. T: My father was sent as a representative of the B'nei B'rith branch to take a present to a Mr. Scheid who he didn't know, who was going to be seventy. And so, he went over there because my parents had just moved into a house which was directly opposite where Kurt's family lived. So, my father came back and he said to my mother, "They're very nice people and have three children. And I said to the father of the family, perhaps your oldest son, wouldn't he like to come over one evening for a cup of coffee." And he came for a cup of coffee and he was invited, and considering he lived on the other side of the road, it was a very short engagement.*

*So, you— you met here in London...*

*London. Oh, yes.*

*Mrs. T: In January, married in May. And surprisingly when we did get married we knew, both families knew each other in that road...*

*Sorry... And where - where did you marry?*

*Where?*

*Mrs. T: [inaudible]*

*Where did we marry?*

*Mrs. T: We married in the Registry Office in Burnt Oak.*

*Burnt Oak Synagogue.*

*Registr...*

*A synagogue anyway.*

*And you wife's family had come much earlier to Britain. Yes. And she was a Chartered Accountant.*

Yes. She was already qualified. I wasn't.

*What sort of cases did you specialise in as a lawyer?*

Local government.

*Did that give you a lot of satisfaction?*

**[0:44:34]**

Yes, because I was sent up and down the country. I didn't just stay in London. I was up - up to the borders of Scotland and up to ...what do you call it - Wales. So, I, I saw a lot of the country. And whenever I came anywhere, the local people had already reserved a hotel room for me and looked after me. And the next morning, I appeared in court. I saw my witnesses in the afternoon. And the next morning I appeared in court for- on behalf of the Crown. And I always sounded very good when I opened up with, "Your Lordship," or, "Your Ladyship, I'm appearing on behalf of the, of the Crown." When you appear on behalf of the Crown, they already feel that you're somebody important, you see. And so, I always used that particular expression: "I appear on behalf of the Crown." And then I called my witnesses, whom I'd seen the day before. And it all went very well. I always decided which cases to take. Because I was the one who decided whether I would take them or not. If I decided they weren't winnable, then I didn't take them! I mean if I decided I had every chance of winning, then I would take the case. But I didn't want to lose cases. So that was fine.

*You must have had a – had a good reputation for winning.*

Yes, I had a good reputation- Well I- because I saw my witnesses the day before and if I felt there was a case, I said, "Your Lordships, I'm going to call my witnesses afterwards, but first I would like to..." I - I always provided them with a copy of the, of the law. So, they had a copy of the Bible there and so on, so all very good. And I lost very few cases, cause if I couldn't win them, I told my witnesses, "The case is not strong enough. We can't win. We'd better hand it over." And they said, "No, we want you to take it." And I said, "Well if you want me to take it..." I took it. Sometimes I won it and sometimes I didn't win. But at least I

gave them the option to, to decide, 'cause they are employing me. And if they employ you and they say, "Take the case." Well, you take it.

*Mrs. T: Then you worked for the Treasury.*

Yes, then I worked for the Treasury.

*When did you work for the Treasury?*

From 1955 onwards, until I retired. It was quite good, really.

*Was your father proud – very proud of you? Did he ever express that?*

**[0:48:06]**

Well, I think he was more proud of my brother, who was a solicitor in Oxford you see. I was only... a travelling solicitor.

*Did that make you feel bad?*

No.

*No...*

I felt quite happy... doing what I was doing. And seeing people and seeing my, my clients.

*You didn't resent it? You didn't resent your father's attitude to your brother?*

Yes. Well, I mean I was quite happy... being seen by the local people.

*Yes.*

And- I mean, I remember one occasion I think, from the Treasury Solicitor. Everybody knew what the Treasury was, but they didn't know what else... a lawyer was. So, I - I was given a

nice room and so on. And the many who came from the Treasury, who was actually higher up than I was, was put upstairs somewhere. And he was livid, because he didn't get the good room. I got the good room.

*Hierarchy. Yes. Ah...*

Hierarchy...it didn't matter.

*When did you become a British citizen?*

I don't know. Don't remember now.

*Was it about 1947, 1950 perhaps?*

Something like that.

*Was it a difficult decision?*

**[0:49:58]**

No.

*No...*

No, no, no. That's because this man came to us, in our house and he said, "Would you like to become...?" My father became British because my – my, my brother... had connections with the Home Office. So, he said, "Wouldn't you like to become British as well?" He said, I said, "Yes, certainly." So, he wrote down, "Yes, certainly." And... then two weeks later he came again. He said, "We've now decided that you could become a British subject. And so, would you sign there, and sign there, and sign there." And that's how I became British! Very simple.

*Did you have a feeling of pride at becoming British?*

Yes... yes. ...Oh, yes, you were quite proud to become British then. Because you- I mean you couldn't be proud of being German anymore, because of the way they treated you. They treated you very badly, as you know. I'm sure you know. The Jews were not treated well in Germany. But in England they were, so of course I was proud.

*Did English Jews, English-born Jews, help you, or...?*

No. The answer is simply no. Didn't help me, or my family. But they helped my brother, because he was in Oxford, you see.

*...And he was knighted, your brother.*

Pardon?

*Your brother was Knighted.*

Yes.

*Yes...*

He was Knighted. He became 'Sir Guenter'. He still is. They haven't made him anything higher. They could have done but they haven't.

*Did you all go to Buckingham Palace?*

Yes, he did, and his wife did. But I didn't.

**[0:52:32]**

*And your father?*

No.

*No...*

My father wouldn't go because...let's face it, his English was not very good. He would have been an embarrassment.

*What organisations did your father join? Did he join the AJR?*

Yes. He joined the AJR... very early on. But that didn't get you anywhere either.

*Why?*

Well, I mean you got no... connection; being a member of the AJR didn't help. I mean... he was a member of the AJR yes.

*Mrs. T: It's a social club. Social.*

*And which synagogue do you go to now?*

Now?

*Mrs. T: Dunstan Road.*

Dunstan Road, down the road here.

*Do your children go to synagogue?*

Yes, we had children. It's four.

*What are their names please?*

What are their names? Well... Guenter...

*Mrs. T: Richard...*

Richard... Caroline...



*Jonathan?*

*Mrs. T: Richard, Jonathan, David and Caroline.*

*Right, so you have Richard, Jonathan, David and Caroline. And did some of them become lawyers too? ...Were some lawyers also? Your children...*

*Mrs. T: No. The oldest ran- Oh, children or grandchildren? The children, none of them became lawyers. ...Our oldest son became a Chartered Accountant. Our second son is a writer.*

*That's, that's fine thank you. ...And do- do they go regularly to synagogue, or have they set Judaism aside? Your children?*

I don't – I'm not with you.

*Oh- do your children go to synagogue? Do they observe the holidays?*

They do but not very often.

*Mrs. T: Oh, the oldest does; the oldest is very active in his synagogue.*

They go, but not very often.

*And do they have an interest in your past, in Germany? And your family there?*

They have gone- I've shown them where I was born, and the house is still there. The only house in the street by the way. And also, which houses there are nearby, and where the synagogue was. I showed them all that when I took them to Berlin.

*Is there a new synagogue where you went in Berlin? Was that destroyed on Kristallnacht?*

Not on Kristallnacht, but during the war. During `Kristallnacht we stayed with some [inaudible] Aryans – friends – in their attic. They put us up in the attic. And we stayed there about four days or five days. Something like that. And then we could go home again, because the... action by the Nazis against Jews was over.

*That must have been terrifying.*

It was terrifying, yes. And then when I was with my father on the train to stay with our Aryan friends, I was also sort of looking around to see whether anyone could see that we were Jewish. I was glad to get out of the train and go to them. But... Yes, we- we were frightened, of course. And a lot of... especially, since one of my uncles was taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and when he came out, he said, “After everything that I have seen, and experienced, I would not advise anyone to stay in this country more than absolutely necessary.” My father took that one in, because before that, he had a very good practice as a lawyer still, under the Nazis. But before then, he didn’t see any need to go because he was... earning good money. He had a good practice. Mainly Jewish practice, but it was a good practice. And then... my uncle came out of camp and said, “After all that I’ve seen, I wouldn’t - you can’t stay in this country more than absolutely necessary... One minute [more] than necessary.” He went to Santiago in Chile, in the end.

*After the war?*

It was before the war.

*Oh, before!*

Yes.

*Mrs. T: During the war he would have been dead!*

*No, no, no, no - no. No, no, no. After the war, did he...?*

After the war, he was in Chile.

*How long was he in Sachsenhausen?*

Pardon?

*How long was he in Sachsenhausen?*

**[0:59:06]**

How long was he? About eight weeks. Something like eight or ten weeks. Something like that.

*If you look back over your life, what do you feel that Britain has given to you? What do you feel you have gained, or lost, by being in Britain?*

Well, we should have got our earlier. We shouldn't have waited that long. But, as I said, my father had a good practice. He was... earning good money. So, if he went - and, we did hear from people who went to Holland, not that that would have helped very much. And they said it was terrible the way they lived. They had no income. And it's- and, you're better off here. The Nazis won't do any harm- won't do anything to you. Well, they - they did. But one didn't know that then.

*Yes... Do you feel bitter at all?*

No. I mean this is all so long ago, that you, you, I wouldn't say you've forgotten it - I haven't forgotten it - but you've got over it.

*Are you glad that your children have had the opportunity to grow up in a free country, and to study?*

Yes. Oh, yes. Well, we had no children then; I wasn't married then.

*No, no. But later...*

Yes. Of course! They can now grow up in a free- in what we think is a free country. I hope it is!

*Mrs T: No longer. It's left Europe, it's got, it's nowhere...*

*Have you been to Israel?*

Pardon?

*Have you been to Israel?*

Yes.

*Did you ever wish to live there?*

Not to live there, but to go there, yes. I enjoyed being there and meet people there and meet places there - see places there. But I wouldn't like to live there, frankly speaking.

*Do you have- is there anything more that you would like to add, or a special message for your children or family?*

No... I mean the only special message is that should things become bad for Jews, "Get out before you're being kicked out. Get, get- get out while you can."

**[1:02:14]**

*Mrs T: Well, this country is not worth anything. It's not- it's left Europe and it's a little island of no worth. I would certainly tell my grandchildren...*

*In terms of the extended family in Germany, what happened to them, please?*

Well, they left... or were kicked out. Some went to Shanghai. Some went to... America.

*Mrs T: To Israel.*

Some went to Israel.

*Did you keep in touch with them, or have you lost touch?*

Well...Yes, to a certain extent. Not very closely, but we do. I mean if we go to Israel, we tell them beforehand so we go and visit. We don't stay with them, but visit our relations in Israel.

*Did you lose a lot of family members?*

No. I'm glad to say we didn't lose a lot- leave a lot there.

*Mrs T: You've got all the family trees.*

*Is there anything else that you would like add or, to return to, that we've discussed?*

No. I mean, the only thing that I would say is that if things begin to look anti-Semitic, get out while you can. So far it hasn't happened. But if it does happen, don't stay and - and wait.

*Yes...*

Because we waited too long.

*Let's hope that it doesn't happen, and...*

I mean, I don't think any British government is likely to be anywhere near as bad as the German government was.

*Thank you very much indeed for kindly agreeing to be interviewed. Thank you very much.*

**[1:04:50]**

You lost - lost your pen there.

*Thank you.*

Right. Any other questions? Have I been able to answer some of them?

*You have, thank you, yes.*

I did my best to try.

*Thank you very much.*

**[Additional passage of recorded interview]**

No, when I got here, I was at Golders Green Cemetery, because my uncle had his in-laws buried there. And he asked the... warden, as it's called, "Have you got a job for my – my nephew?" So, he said, "Well you come here and weed." So, I came there and started weeding in the cemetery. So, my first job here was as a cemetery gardener. An unusual job to have.

*Did you find that morbid?*

No, I didn't find that morbid. But it was a job. I got two pound a week for it! When I told them at Bloomsbury House, that I was getting two pound a week, they said, "That's wonderful!" I didn't think it was wonderful, but they thought it was- I mean it was good money in those days. So, there I was getting- I got my two pounds every Friday.

*How long did you do that for?*

About eight weeks. ...And then there were no more jobs so they said, "Well we can't have you anymore after next Friday. We'll have you here one more week and then you can go home." And the next job I had I was being interned. Not so good.

*Not so good, no...*

But at least I'd had a job at one time, so I had some points.

*Aha...*

Which enabled me to claim unemployment pay. ...And then I got interned and that was the end of that.

*Yes...*

Finish. And then on the Isle of Man it was all very nice. I mean we had a house. All Jewish people there, except for one I think, he was not Jewish. And ...we were fed by the British. And for the Jewish holidays we got kosher food sent from Liverpool. And then I - I was sent home again. Thank you very much. Any more questions?

*Thank you.*

OK. Thank you.

**[1:07:49]**

**[End of interview]**

**[Start of photographs and documents]**

**[1:08:10]**

**Photo 1.**

This photograph is Markus or - or Max Treitel, my grandfather, and his wife Cecilie, also known as Zilli, after whom my sister is named, Zilli. But now in England she's called Celia, because Zilli is not a good name in England. And, that's my grandfather and my grandmother. Markus and Cecilie Treitel. Taken before the war, First war.

*Mrs. Treitel: Do you mean the 1930s or earlier?*

No, earlier.

*Mrs. Treitel: [In the] 20s?*

Maybe in the 20s.

**Photo 2.**

[delay]

Sideboard in Berlin, Felixstraße 17.

*And what was that address?*

That was where my grandparents had their house. They lived there. The Levy grandparents. The Treitel grandparents didn't- I don't have any pictures.

**Photo 2** [repeat? – after some discussion]

This was in Felixstraße *Siebzehn*, [house number 17], my grandparents' house. It was rather large. And this is their sitting room. Or rather was their...

**Photo 3.**

This is my mother and me, her eldest son, in 1922.

[1:10:53]

**Photo 4.**

Nice outfit –very smart. This was taken about 1930. And it's of Max Treitel, the eldest son of Theodor Treitel and Hanna Treitel, his wife. In Berlin.

**Photo 5.**

This is a picture of Kurt Max Treitel, the eldest son of Theodor and Hanna Treitel, in Berlin. It's- it's red and white, and then later on it became red and yellow. Once you got to Quarta [third year in Gymnasium/ grammar school].

*This is the school cap.*

School cap... which I was very proud of. It's why the picture was taken.

**Document 1.**

*That's your I.D. Card.*



My I.D. card. My identity card... With my picture on it, and also...

*Mrs. Treitel: Is it your German...?*

German?

*German identity card.*

Yes, it's German. It's got a swastika on it. If it was English it wouldn't have a swastika.

*And the 'J'.*

Yeah.

**[1:13:15]**

**Photo 6.**

This is a picture of my mother, Hanna Lily Treitel, born Levy, in Berlin. 1944 – no, sorry, [19]34.

*In England? It would be- It's later, I think.*

It's in '46. It was taken, I think, in Dorking.

**Photo 7.**

This is Kurt and Renate Treitel, about 1955, in London. ...Engagement party.

...Uncle Ernest and my grandmother.

*Where?*

I can't tell you...In London, but where it was taken, I don't know. In 1955.

**Photo 8.**

*Who is in the picture please Kurt? And where was it taken?*

Renate is on that picture... with a bunch- with the flowers.

*Is that on your wedding day?*

Yes. At the Rembrandt Hotel in, in... Southwest London. Opposite the Victoria and Albert Museum.

**Photo 9.**

This is Kurt and Renate Treitel cutting their wedding cake. On the wedding day ...May 1955.  
...Very smart.

**Photo 10.**

This is a family picture on the occasion of our wedding. This is David, Richard, Kurt, Caroline and Jonathan. ...They are all, except for me, they're our children and... and me.

**[End of photos and documents]**

**[1:16:59]**