

Interview with Inez BERRIBI on July 31, 2019 in Paris, France

WAV M4197009

45 minutes 52 seconds

WAV M4197010

15 minutes 01 seconds

Inez Nunez was born on January 7, 1924 in Tunis to Dr. Arthur Nunez and his wife Jenny (née Levi). Her father was the head of a hospital in Tunis. The family spoke Italian and socialized only within the Italian-speaking community. She does not remember the family being too observant. Her brother Claudio was born in 1927 and her sister Lucia was born in 1930. Like many other Jewish Italians in Tunisia, the family was originally from Livorno, Italy, where Inez's grandfather was a well-known gynecologist.

(USHMM interviews were conducted with her cousins Dr. Giacomo Nunez in April, 2010 and Dr. Guglielmo Levi in November, 2011.)

She attended the *Liceo Italiano* until the age of 15. She remembers a speech by Mussolini that was broadcast on the radio in September, 1940, in which he proclaimed that Jews were no longer considered Italian citizens. This inflicted a deep wound on all members of the Italian Jewish community, many of whom were not only fiercely patriotic, having fought for Italy during WW I, but were even supporters of many of Mussolini's policies. Madame Berrebi emphasizes that she and other Italian Jews did not suffer physically so much as "morally".

From that time on, she was summarily expelled from the Italian school and obliged to resume her studies in a French school. Like her friend, Lucia Bitbol, she had never spoken a word of French in her life, but her teachers were a lot nicer than Lucia's and took into account the challenges she faced. She was determined to pass her baccalaureate exam in French and finally did so after several tries. She went on to obtain her teaching certificate, despite her parents' disapproval.

During the war, her father lost his job as head of the hospital. He was first interned by the Vichy authorities in a concentration camp because he was Jewish and after Tunisia was liberated in 1943, he was placed in a concentration camp because he was Italian. Despite rationing, her father had many friends and was able to procure what was needed to nourish his family. An Italian maid stayed on with the family during the entire time Dr. Nunez was away and could not pay her, saying that she could wait till the end of the war.

A room was requisitioned in the family apartment by an officer during the German Occupation of Tunisia, starting in November, 1942, and later by a British or American soldier when Tunisia was liberated in May, 1943.

Inez married Victor Berrebi, a landowner and farmer from Sfax, after the war. (Although "Berrebi" is a name of indigenous Jewish Tunisians, his mother was from a Livornese family.) After Tunisia became an independent country in 1956, Jews were not considered full-fledged citizens although their families had lived there for centuries. People plotted to get his land and falsely accused him of a crime – importing weapons from a foreign country or something of that nature. He was found guilty and sentenced to a short prison term, but his land was confiscated and he could no longer

work. They already had started a family and it was decided that Victor would stay home and take care of the children and cook, while Ines taught Italian in French schools to support the family.

In 1971, with 2 of the eldest children already pursuing their university studies in France, the family decided it was time to leave Tunisia. Since Madame Berrebi was considered a French government civil servant, she was assigned a teaching position in Bois l'Abbé in the Val de Marne region surrounding Paris, with a house to live in.

Madame Berrebi enjoyed her work and her students held her in high esteem. After the sudden death of her husband, she continued to work... Her last teaching job was in a high school near the *Porte d'Italie* in the south of Paris.

Her children and grandchildren are devoted to her and she has friends from the Tunisian community that migrated to France.