HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

CHAYALE ASH-FUHRMAN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher
Date: September 21, 1981

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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CA - Chayale Ash-Fuhrman[1] [interviewee]

JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]
Date: September 21, 1981

Tape one, side one:

JF: This is an interview with Chayale Ash-Fuhrman, done on September 21, 1981 with Josey Fisher. Tape one, side one. Mrs. Fuhrman, can you tell me when and where you were born?

CA: I was born in 1920 in the city of Kishinev. It was the capital of the province Bessarabia. Till 1918 Bessarabia was Russia. From 1918 and further till 1940 it belongs to Romania, so we were always using simultaneously three languages. Russian in the streets, Romanian in the school, and Yiddish at home. I was born there, my parents were born there, my brother was born there, my grandparents were born there, and all my youth, my childhood, I was in the same street, in the same house, grew up together with children, what most of them are not alive today, only one family what I met in 1973, when I went to see my town.

JF: What kind of community was this?

CA: Kishinev was a specific, very Jewish community. A lot of Jews came to Bessarabia from Russia after Romania took over the province, took it away from Russia, so a lot of Jewish people came in, so Kishinev became a really Jewish community. It was a lot Jews and Russians, no Romanians there, very little Romanian community, only the army what was standing around the town was Romanian people. But usually it was only Jewish people and a little Moldavian people, they call it. That's the reason when the Russians took it over in 1940 they called it Moldavian Republic, because it was Moldavian people there. Moldavian people is a mixture between Ukrainians, Russians and Romanians and their language what is similar to Romanian but mixed with Russian-Slavic words and... but you never learned Moldavian, you learned...even now in Russia they don't teach Moldavian language. They are forcing Russian language in Moldavian Republic.

JF: So the immediate streets that you were familiar with were primarily Jewish families?

CA: All Jewish families.

JF: All Jewish families.

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[1]née Averbuch. Her Personal history form states that Chayale's father's stage name was Ash which became the family name.

CA: Because my grandparents were really deep Jewish families...in that time you didn't know about too much assimilated families. Jewish people were Jewish people. Assimilated maybe you found in very big places like Moscow or Leningrad or Bucharest in Romania. This is like little Paris or whatever they call it but in Bessarabia in the towns they were really Jewish people. They could be intellectual differently but very little assimilated. Grandparents mostly, they were very religious and our house was... but it's interesting very modern religious, they did not impose on the children and grandchildren nothing religious. I could travel on *Shabbos*, I could do certain things. We didn't have telephones in these places but I could put on the light on *Shabbos*. Grandma would not do it but she didn't impose on us not to do it, and my grandfather was playing chess with very important Jewish people who came into our home. He told us that in the 18--something he was even in America for a while and he didn't like it too much, and he didn't find a job so he came back to Bessarabia. He was... Grandfather was a fantastic person, because from this grandfather came out a big actor like my father was. He loved theatre, he loved the newspaper, he loved chess. Imagine in that time to be this modern, but in the same time he was very religious, in a certain way, and he worked as a correspondent secretary from the synagogues for hiring cantors for the synagogues. He was very, how you call it? He could write Russian, and Hebrew and Yiddish, so he was the one who corresponded with cantors all over the world to bring in to the synagogues. And Grandma was the sweetest woman in the world. My parents were actors. They traveled around and I was left by my, be raised by grandparents. It was time there was no food in the house...very, very poor. Why they were poor? He was paid by the synagogues. Twice a year. For Passover and before the High Holidays. This was the time he was paid and in between came, I remember a Purim and my grandmother was sitting crying there was no food in the house and I remember sending me to school...she didn't have nothing to give me for lunch. She took empty bottles under the shawl and changed them for a piece of *halvah*.

JF: It sounds like your grandparents, then, were like parents to you.

CA: And she gave me a piece of halvah or a little something to take with me to school. I walked to school very, very far, didn't have any money to pay for the, we used to go by the tramway. You know what's tramway? Electrical car. So, but in the house was always...we had paintings on the walls. My father was an artist and a younger son, an uncle what lived together with us, he was very how you say it? Socialistic inclined, and went around with lectures and other things to make a better world. And I was raised in a very interested family with grandparents religious, and my uncle and aunts very awakened in the time for to making a better world, how do you say? And it was really... I felt good but in the same time I suffered very, very much. I saw my parents mostly when I was young till 10 years old only summertime.

JF: Now, your grandparents sound like they had quite liberal children. Were they able to deal with that or was it hard for them?

CA: No. Yes, they were able to deal with that. That is the thing I saw before. They were very, very... I don't find an English word to say, they, I really don't know how the word, it is, you have to compromise and find, and this was Grandma and the same way was Grandfather. Very, very understanding people.

JF: What kind of Jewish education, formal Jewish education, were you able to have?

CA: I had my first four classes, they were regular elementary school. After that I made, in three different towns, in three different towns I made like they call it complementary school. Like here in America you have eight grades, four and then four junior high, I don't talk about senior high because this is already like in our places it they were called *Lyceum*. But other four they called it complementary adding, like complementary grades, so I went for the fifth grade and sixth like after the four in three, four different towns because I started trouble with my parents. I started in school and in the middle I had to leave and go to another town. And I start again in another town and I made one grade in three, four towns. It was very hard for me and I was a very, very good student. I dreamed to go and continue my education and I don't know how far it was, but all these circumstances were impossible. I finished up my four grades in elementary every year with bronze medals and diplomas and I was always a sick girl and a complaining girl and nervous. I always had with the stomach before going to school. You know like some kids are? And all my aunts and uncles dreamt. They played on the lottery to win money to send Chayale to high school. This was their dream always because I was a fantastic student. Only because I didn't have the means like maybe other kids, but, thank God, they had uniforms in school. A little black dress with a white collar and a bow. I could look like other kids; if no, I would feel very bad.

JF: You're talking now about the elementary school?

CA: Yes, elementary and higher even. Uniforms, in Romania they always wear uniforms.

JF: This is a public school?

CA: Yes.

JF: Were there non-Jews there as well?

CA: Yes.

JF: Then what was your experience with the non-Jewish children in public school?

CA: Very nice. First, maybe because I was a very good student, and they used to cling to a good student, to help him out. Usually I went home with a group of children and helped them to make the homework all together. Maybe this was the reason and I didn't feel any...absolutely nothing. Not from the teachers and not from the students.

JF: And not from the parents either?

CA: No, no. No. In that time in those countries (?) I didn't know nobody from the parents of the students. I could have one or two close friends that I knew the parents

and they were Jewish, but usually you never knew the parents from the other students. As I remember now. And after I finished I stopped again, standing in Kishinev and I... how you say it? enrolled, or enlisted in a professional school.

JF: You're jumping now until after...?

CA: Right in the beginning, after I finished the fifth and sixth grades I went to a school, starting from the beginning again, from the fifth in a professional school, what is called professional. It was called "Professional School for Girls."

JF: So, let me just clarify this for a minute.

CA: Yes.

JF: After you had had four years in the public school you started traveling with your parents.

CA: And, I made the fifth and sixth grades in different towns.

JF: And why, at that point, did your parents decide to take you on the road with them?

CA: Because, I grew up and I asked for it, to be with my parents, one. Secondly, it was very hard for my grandparents to hold me. My aunt married and moved out and they were alone and old. It was hard for them to keep me. Later on, when I decided that I cannot do any more different towns the same...I would never finish up no school. I decided to stay again, but I was staying in my aunt's place...

JF: This was your father's sister, then?

CA: No, it was father's brother's wife.

JF: O.K.

CA: I mean, uncle and aunt. I was living with them.

JF: And the name of this school was "The Professional...?"

CA: "The Professional School for Girls." But this was a specific Jewish school. Private Jewish school. I didn't pay in that school; it was supported by the Jewish community. And in this school you could learn a trade, the same time you had education. You worked... learned to work and worked from morning until 12:00, from 12:00 till 1:00 you had an hour intermission, with hot food to eat, a lunch, and from 1:00 to 5:00 it was learning. It was Romanian language, as a language. Yiddish, Jewish was done everything in Yiddish. I had geography in Yiddish, mathematics in Yiddish, and, how you call it, history in Yiddish, Jewish history, and Yiddish was the main language in that school to learn everything. It was like a Yiddish Jewish day school. But it was higher. I learned French as a second language in that school. It was obligatory. I don't know how you say it, and the same way, you could learn dental technician, you would learn leather works, bags and belts and all kinds of what's to do with leather, and sewing. Embroidery and sewing. I started as technician, but I was so skinny, and so green and blue, that the work with technician didn't agree with me. I came home always with headaches. They worked with fire, with rubber, with cultures of all kinds, so I changed for sewing. In this sewing school I finished. And thanks to them I survived a lot of times. I survived the war

by knowing sewing. This will come later. I finished sewing. I make even now my costumes and evening gowns for the stage myself.

JF: Now, during those years did you also learn Hebrew?

CA: No.

JF: Not at all?

CA: Only Yiddish.

JF: Did you attend any kind of Hebrew or Jewish history in school other than your...

CA: I knew very, very much because we were learning in school in the Yiddish language. History of the Jews. Not about Israel but about history of the Jews, and I knew a lot about all Jewish writers, all Yiddish literature, everything to make you be proud as Jew without learning Hebrew. I learned Hebrew a lot. From the Jewish language I understood a lot of Hebrew. Because Yiddish is full of Hebrew idioms and words. And, the same time, later on...when I didn't went to school any more, my parents took a teacher and I learned Hebrew, to read, to write and to know about, and it came in handy a lot in the Yiddish language, being I was lectured in Yiddish and it gave me well what Hebrew I knew. But my parents tried to give me...they took a teacher and I learned Gothic German and Hebrew in the same time and I know perfect Gothic German, to write and to read now, and I like to catch in a lot and I learned, I learned, I knew a lot of Hebrew, read and write before I came to Israel I knew a lot.

JF: You said you had a brother?

CA: Yes.

JF: He was younger than you?

CA: Younger, two years younger.

JF: What was his name?

CA: His name is, in Jewish Yaacov. And in Russian they call him Yasha. He still signs his paintings...he is one of the biggest artists in Russia now. He is still there, in Kishinev, and he signs his paintings Yasha Ash. We are continuing and the reason that I continue my stage name because Ash was my father's stage name, and up till now theatre or artist's painting we signs always our name Ash. We want to continue with father's name. He worked too hard for that name.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

CA: Yes.

JF: And their stage experience?

CA: My father was an actor, very young, started with amateur groups and became an actor. When he met mother...he met her in an amateur group being the director. And they married and they entered the professional theatre together.

JF: When you say the professional theatre...?

CA: Yiddish professional theatre. Yiddish theatre in Romania...it was born in Romania. Yiddish theatre comes from Romania. Abraham Goldfaden, the father of the

Yiddish theatre, founded the first Yiddish theatre in Jassy, Romania, and it was really blossoming in Romania all these years. Even in the First World War, it was really a boom of the Yiddish theatre, and he dedicated all his life. He was a fantastic makeup man. He was a fantastic painter, you don't say painter...artist. Art painter, I mean.

JF: You're speaking now of your father?

CA: Father, yes. All my families after that are taking after my father. He was a big artist, and since not finishing school he used to make all of scenery. In that time it wasn't a theatre with a special one to make the scenery and a special one to design the scenery, another one to make the make-up and a third one...It was a group of actors who worked very hard bringing Yiddish theatre to the people, and doing everything for themselves. My father...he could come in the theatre in a little town not finding any sceneries, take newspapers and put them on the back of the wall and in one minute was a forest, or a sea or whatever it has to be the background of the show and they used to...I remember, they used to wear front for a tuxedo, not the whole shirt, only the front, you know, the starched front of the tuxedo. And it was times that one pair of shoes was worn by the same two or three actors, if they were not at the same time on the stage. This was the real pioneering of the Yiddish theatre. I remember times we were traveling with wagons, covered wagons, I remember that because I was little in the summertime. The covered wagons, like you see in the West, the pioneer, and my father used to [unclear] with the children, this was the way they traveling, the actors, going from little...the town could have 500 Jews, but they came to perform in that little town. And it was business always...relative for that time. The streets were not paved. They used to come at night, in the theatre with lanterns and the mud up til here, but they still came to the theatre. Because theatre was a part of Jewish culture. They couldn't be without it. Not a comfort as the culture. The theatre was the culture. And they used to come, I remember...it written here the episode...that a big star from America, Mischa Fishsal...my son carries his name...came to a little town, and it was raining and it was muddy, and he couldn't come here in his nice shoes and his nice coat, top hat, you know, the old time actors, and he couldn't come to the theatre...the mud was up to the knees. So people came from the town and they made a little bench, how you say it, from their hands, like this, and he was sitting there and they were carrying him to the theatre to have the performance that night in the rain. Because this was life. This was real life. The working people, the younger people, how do you say it? the people who were dreaming for a better time, the younger ones, they were eating theatre. This was their life. This was their school. Theatre was their school. Because you took Yiddish literary things and put them on stage where they came and see these things they were learning.

JF: What kind of subjects were the plays about?

CA: It was from Y. L. Peretz, it was from Mendele Mocher Sforim, it was from Sholem Aleichem...it was from Peretz Hirschbein, it was like from An-Ski like *The Dybbuk*. It was really...it was theatres they have the easier repertoire. It was theatres that

had other repertoire, the more literary. And sometimes it came a group of actors who performed a mixture, like the easier, the lighter one, like revue and vaudeville style or comedy, musical comedy. And it was for another kind of audience. And the more better ones, the literary ones for another kind of audience. But they had to knew everything. And it was in style, Biblical plays. I remember Father and Mother playing *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, it's a beautiful play by Abraham Goldfaden, *Shulamis*, the *Ten Commandments*, *Tsen Gibot* in Jewish, they say it. It was biblical about Bar Kochba. There was all kind of biblical shows, what was the biggest success in that time. This was the beginning of the Yiddish theatre, the blooming, to bring in the music. Fantastic music. If you hear these days you would think that it's fantastic biblical operas. But nobody's using them.

JF: Where was this music written?

CA: It was written by Abraham Goldfaden. The writer and the founder wrote the music and the script and the lyrics and everything. And it's still now, I say, if they would take today and put on a show like *Shulamit*, with Absalom you know, all the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and all the things with Abigail, the queen...it would be fantastic, but nobody wants to put in money in a Yiddish show in a big company like I am talking about. It would be something fantastic but you have a lot of Jewish angels for Broadway but no one is a Jewish angel for a Jewish theatre.

JF: At that time how was your parents' troupe financed?

CA: Nobody, whatever it came in... they looked through the little through the curtain to see if people are coming and it's dressed up in the biblical things with white bedsheets with all kinds of crowns. Everything handmade and everything by themselves. And it was *real* theatre. I mean with all the heart, what is real theatre. The actor gives all his own soul for that. That was really done in that way.

JF: How many people were traveling with your parents?

CA: Oh, it was a group, sometimes eight, ten, twelve, dependent on the...if they found, like, the way of going it was that it was cooperative, how you say it? How much came in, they paid the expenses and the rest, everybody got the same pot. This was the way. If somebody did another thing than only acting, he could get another, some pay as an expense, because my father made the scenery or my family did, but it was really, they call it, *chaverim* trouper... *chaverim* trouper means, you know what is "*chaverim*"? *Chaverim* troupe, this was the name of this kind of groups that were traveling. And this was my youth. Traveling around with *chaverim* troupers. Later on it got more sophisticated, bigger towns, big open-air theatres... They were looking for summertime to perform in big towns with open-air theatres. Because air-conditioning, nobody knew about this kind of thing then. So, open-air theatres was in style, and this was done in Czernowitz. that's a big town in the Bukovina. It was called "Little Vienna" at that time. They were having Jassy, this is the capital of Moldavia. It was a big open-air theatre. Bucharest, big open air theatre. So, summertime if somebody came in... and he called it a

producer with money, they took this little group for the summer, adding a star who came from America, there was good business.

JF: You said that you traveled with your parents?

CA: Yes.

JF: From the time you were two?

CA: Yes. All the time.

JF: And you were on stage?

CA: When I was two years old they took me as a child on stage. No talking, but I was on stage with my parents. But from six years on I was performing, having parts. It was the show *Kiddush ha-Shem*, about the pogroms in Russia. And the prologue is that a grandfather tells the story of *Kiddush ha-Shem* to his grandson, and I was the little grandson who was, the grandfather was talking to, and the little grandson was asking questions, what is a pogrom and why did they do it. And then the whole story is the show and the finale, the epilogue, is again the grandfather is finishing with his grandson. This was the show *Kiddush ha-Shem*, by Sholem Asch.

JF: Was your brother also on stage?

CA: No. He was ten or eleven years old. Straight from the elementary school to the art institute. Sent away to learn artistry, design, drawing, or whatever it was. Because he was really a genius in this field.

JF: Where did your parents and the troupe perform during the winter months?

CA: In little towns all around Romania, Bessarabia...

JF: What kinds of buildings? Were there theatres, or...?

CA: There were firehouses, there were wooden, big barracks, like they bring in movies there and the theatre was there. If it happened a bigger one like a already brick building...but in the same time, how you say? They used to make weddings there, or other things...this was the way of to perform.

JF: And did they operate according to bookings as they do today, or would they just go to another town?

CA: No. They came to another town and they were announcing...a poster, sometimes written by hand, put on a little wagon, and the wagon was traveling around the town and the people should read. And there was another system. They call it a "caller." It was a system where a guy would go over town announcing that Shabbos starts this and this hour, and that the *mikva* is heated, this is having a *bris*, that there was born a child, or it was saying that this one died...This was the way of announcement, in the little towns in that time. It was announced in our town came a Yiddish theatre will perform in this and this hall, this and this time, the show whatever name it was, and the same time he had in his hand a big basket with bagels he would sell in the same time walking in the street. It was really characters that disappeared from life and it was fantastic. I would mean, how do you say? a cultural expression, a way of expressing a culture, with a caller going on the streets announcing all of these kind of things...and at the same time because they

made jokes even. “Tonight we’ll play at 8 o’clock. They’re announcing the play, *The Witch*.”

Tape one, side two:

JF: This is tape one, side two of an interview with Mrs. Chayale Ash-Fuhrman.

CA: Yes, I started before...sometimes you hear the caller say...they were joking about, like classical jokes, "Tonight 8:00 you can see the Yiddish performance, *The Witch* from Abraham Goldfaden and don't forget 5:00 they are heating up the *mikva* and Yossel had a son..." It was done... I don't know, for me, I feel warm inside when I remember this little...not everything I remember, but a lot my parents used to talk about, that I was listening in the house, and I know about that. And, I will always remember that I slept on a big...how you call it? from straw. They used to have...they didn't have luggage like now, from leather fancy, they had straw cases.

JF: Like wicker?

CA: Wicker. Wicker cases, and we had a big one, and in this was parts of scenery and little, wigs and all kinds of costumes, and they used to make my bed on this big wicker case, or whatever they call it, because it was in the room, only...I am raised, not knowing what does it mean, a private house. What does it mean, a closet with linen? Because usually it was [unclear] say rented rooms, hotel rooms, you know, private rooms, furnished rooms, so they gave you the linen, they gave you the towels, they gave you the certain of things, and until I grew up and I was settled down in Israel in '48 I didn't know what does it mean, a closet with linen to have in your house linen. I did not know what does it mean.

JF: During the performances, what was the audience like? Was there inter-change between the audience and the stage?

CA: They loved the actors. If they liked an actor they would wait for him after, and kiss him and talk to him, and invite him *Shabbos* for a meal, they were able to take out a coat and put it on an actor. There was a love between people really a personal love between the audience and the actor. It was a real fantastic love. Some places, some places you find it now, too. Some, but in a modern way, in a different way, they invite you in the house, they invite you to out places, or to their factory and choose whatever you like for yourself. This is what when I travel in South Africa and South America is to meet people like...in the same way, eye to eye, friend right away with the actor, admirer, and this was, in the little towns it was beautiful. Really the reasons they survived the theatre because the actors were really of *tsoris* [troubles] but survived only for that reason, the love between the audience and the actor.

JF: Were there any government controls or interference with the theatre?

CA: It was big interferences, since it appeared, Yiddish theatre. It was a time in the 18..., from 1876, '77, '78—in these years, the governments...and this was Russian government, didn't allow Yiddish theatre when Bessarabia was still theirs, but, they allowed German, to speak German on the stage, Deutsch, so they performed...usually a

man stood by the door, and then you saw coming something, somebody from the government, checking on them, and they start speaking German on the stage. This was a long time. And the time that Sholem Aleichem started writing, he had... "I hope there will come a time that my actors will play my plays in Yiddish and not in German."

JF: This was during what years?

CA: '76, '77, '78, '87, '86, '89, approximately in that years. In Romania it was a big persecution for the Yiddish theatre, Yiddish actors, for everything that was Yiddish, but it wasn't...how would I say? I remember, I have to make a jump, it was times that they didn't allow a Yiddish theatre at all, so, in big places, so in the little towns it was a lot easier to go by.

JF: When are you talking about now?

CA: In the '30s. It was a...because, it started the era of antisemitism, you call it Nazism, in that time. We called it antisemitism and it really was maybe the era of Nazism or whatever—the racism it was already...the air was already filled with this kind of things in the '30s, so they start [not?] allowing renting theatres to Jewish theatres. A printer wouldn't print posters for a Yiddish theatre, so they were written by hand. They start-- I remember, the performing was, if the police would come, they say that it is a benefit for a poor family or a benefit for a bride to marry a, you know, like Jewish tradition, *Rachmoses* [phonetic] *Kalle*. [*Rachmones] Kalle* means to make money for a poor bride to marry. So, we used to prepare leaflets or tickets and it was written: "This night is a benefit for this and this cause," so if the government comes they know it's a benefit not theatre.

JF: So, the atmosphere from what you were describing before, where the caller went around and announced the performance was in the '20s.

CA: This was in the '20s. It was in the '30s, too, in the little towns. In the big towns it was a bigger *kvetching* how you say it? squeezing the Jewish culture, the Jewish thing because in the air there was already things start appearing: "Don't speak Yiddish or Russian in the tramways." "Don't speak Jewish in the bus," with announcements. It started already this kind of things that we felt it was very hard on a Jewish actor, and this was in the middle '30s, it started in the middle '30s.

JF: And these were government signs?

CA: These were government signs.

JF: What was your understanding of what was happening in Germany in the early '30s? You were at this time in your early teens.

CA: We knew what had happening. We knew what had happening. I don't know if everybody knew. I knew because I was in the Yiddish cultural life and it was that in our home came Jewish newspapers, Russian newspapers, Romanian newspapers, and if the Romanian newspaper didn't write everything, we had it from the other newspaper, because we had it in the house. Some families did not know *one* newspaper, depends on the way of thinking, the way of being raised. In our house we knew that we have to read

and to know what's going on and we knew because we felt it in our...in, I remember in 1935, my parents with me together, I started being a prompter. When I was 15 years old I was prompting in the Yiddish theatre. Sitting down in the little...you don't have it anymore here now.

JF: In the little hole, you mean?

CA: Yes, a little hole, prompting...because I went to school in the daytime and at night I was prompting because I read beautiful Yiddish and they took me in to being a prompter. I read all kind of writings, I could write, read, so that this theatre was performed in teahouses. People came to drink tea and in the moment that the show was to start, they put down the tea...it wasn't allowed to serve tea, to drink tea, and the show was going on. In case somebody comes from the government, people start drinking tea. Tea was entertainment. It wasn't theatre, it has to be informal so to *fashmear*[2] the eyes of the government. In this started...it was teahouses, wine houses, you couldn't go in any more in a big theatre.

JF: You were done with your education to become a seamstress?

CA: Yes, I finished up this professional school. I finished up this school, it was, let me think...15 or 16 years old.

JF: And at that point you went back on the stage with your parents?

CA: I went back professionally to the theatre.

JF: And you never actually worked as a seamstress... school. You went back with your parents on the road?

CA: No. No, I started using my knowledge of seamstress in the war, in the wartime. I could make myself little things, but I didn't use it. I used my knowledge in Yiddish more than the profession. And...I was sometimes dressed up in a part, wanting to prompt for the other actors, and when I knew that my cue is coming I went out from that under the stage and coming onto the stage and performing. This was my life.

JF: Many hats.

CA: I loved it, I loved it, and this comes in very handy today. I can put up scenery, I can work, I can make props, I can do everything what is you need for a theatre and I love it. This is really. I love it. I think I will die loving it.

JF: Were the people in the theatre religious in any kind of way of practice or was it more of an ethnic-cultural...

CA: Ethnic, cultural, dedicated to the Jewish cause entirely, but in Yiddish cultures, mostly. Holidays...we were...some actors went to the synagogue, some actors not. They were very modern, they were not assimilated, but they didn't believe in it. I don't remember my father going to the synagogue, Mother, yes. Mother used to light the candles even in the train in the time when we were traveling. I will remember this all my life. She would do lit them, say the blessing, and how you say it?

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[2]Hoodwink.

JF: Snuffed them?

CA: Yes, in the train, because we were afraid to burn them. But everywhere, wherever we were, in a rented room in a hotel and whatever we traveled, Friday she used to lit the candles. All my life, I remember Momma lighting the candles. She wasn't very religious...used to go to High Holidays in the synagogue. If we were in a place where we could do it, if we were in that time in a big town, with a big temple and a big synagogue, we used to go. I remember when I was little, I used to go with her. Let's say, if it was summertime and we were together and on the holidays, I would be with them. And I don't talk about grandparents they wouldn't...And at the same time I had uncles and aunts, young ones, modern, they didn't go to the synagogue. Mother used to go—she was the oldest daughter-in-law—she used to go to the synagogue, and...what's about...to tell about Israel. We were very aware of that. Of *Hachshara* at that time, of people that go to Israel with certificates at that time. My brother run away from home—he was 11 years old—to Constanza to go to Israel illegal. And we brought him back because he was only 11 years old. And, you know, he was a *Betarist*, from Jabotinsky, like *Herut* now. It was *Betar* before. He was a *Betar* and his friends...he run away from home at only 11 years old to go to Palestine. In that time, it was an awareness in the young people about these things.

JF: What about you and your parents?

CA: No, my parents, we were always...we dreamt about in that time...my father, he was invited several times to come perform to America and he didn't want that. I don't know why, but, he didn't go. I remember in 1939, 1928, he was invited to America he didn't go, and I don't know why. He was really giving away his life...only theatre. When we arrived in a town with a wagon or with a train, he used to take his...how you say it? not valise, his bag, and go, and Mother used to say, "Where are you going?" He say, he go to the theatre. "Come with us first to the house, see where we are staying, in a hotel or whatever," and he used to say, "First, my way is to the theatre, then I'll go and see where I stay." This kind of person was he.

JF: Did you have any communication with theatre troupes from other countries? Russia?

CA: Yes, from Poland. Russia was closed up right after the first war...with Poland, with America. With London, we used to correspond with actors from London who run away from Russia, and they were in London. Corresponded all the time with America. I remember after the first war, Mother said that she got packages with clothing, with some instant food from America after the World War, and the same thing we have after the Second World War. American actors' union, actors was the first to help us out with clothing and food after the war. This is [unclear]. We had connections, we knew which of the actors are performing now, what play is going on now, what show is really a hit so we can do it here, too. You know how it goes professionally, and a lot from the '30s, starting from the '30s, middle '30s and even earlier, in the beginning of the '30s, all

the stars from America came to Romania to perform. Molly Picon was performing. In 1927 she was already a big actress. It was Aaron Lebedeff came to perform. All this...I don't even know every name what it came. From Poland came stars together with ensembles from Romania, they performed in Romania.

JF: Did you ever have any contact with Ida Kaminska?

CA: Sure, I know her personal, very much. I know her daughter. I know her granddaughter and I know her cousins what live in Israel. And, big actress in Chicago. Dina Halpern is a first cousin from Ida Kaminska. And I performed with Dina Halpern for many years together. I know her, sure I know her well.

JF: You knew the family in Poland before the war?

CA: I didn't know her from Poland before I know her that she was performed in Poland. I know that her mother was a big actress. She was called the "Mother of the Yiddish theatre." This is her mother. She continued in the tradition of her mother...Ida Kaminska...I was at the funeral in New York when she died. And, I knew her daughter very well, I know her now, too Ruth Kaminska. I know her very well. And other actors...it was *Lampe*, it was David Seiderman and Anna Lerner. They were all killed in the gas chambers. I knew them very well in Romania. They came the first time with the Vilna operetta to Romania. They were [unclear] *Rosa Von Stambol*, *Bayadera*, [phonetic] big Austrian operettas done in Yiddish by a troupe from Vilna. They came to Romania, my parents were over there together performing.

JF: So they would perform together when the Polish theatre came?

CA: Sometimes only the stars came over and performed with the Romanian ensembles. Not theatres entirely, not all the ensembles come from Poland. Big stars came over and worked with ensembles from Romania.

JF: Did your family, likewise, go to Poland and perform?

CA: No, to Czechoslovakia. They were in Czechoslovakia 1937, 1938, and when Hitler came to Vienna...in 1938 Hitler came to Vienna, and they run away from Czechoslovakia through Poland, back to Romania.

JF: Was there any talk at the time...they were obviously aware of what was happening, and the threat being so close...was there any talk of leaving or any possibility of leaving?

CA: That was my parents, because they were the type, group performing in Czechoslovakia and they had in mind from Bratislava to go to Vienna, and Hitler came already to Vienna, and they knew what's going on, the Jews are sent away and generally what was happening in concentration camps, labor camps...It wasn't then extermination camps and a lot of people from Vienna came to America and a lot of people came from Vienna went to Romania back, to Poland and to Romania, and then they came back from, in 1938 when we came...they came back to...I didn't go over there to Czechoslovakia because the government said that I need a separate passport. Usually I traveled with the same passport as a minor and in that time they said that I am not a minor, I have to have

my own passport. Why can't I take my passport? I have to go back to Kishinev and take my passport there. So they were alone. I was already 17 or 18 years old and I went back, I spend with my aunt and tried to get a visa to get a passport and they didn't want to give me anymore. They made a lot of problems to give me because I am a Jew, to give me a passport to travel, and I remember the night I went from...this was...a night before Purim. I will never forget it.

JF: This was in 1938, now?

CA: Yes. I came from...I tried to find a big lawyer, maybe he can make me a passport, a Romanian lawyer. If maybe he can make me a passport so I can be united with my parents. Going home from this lawyer, I saw in the streets...how you say? Groups of peasants, you know, groups, big groups of peasants from the villages, with how you call the things you work in the fields? Rakes and hoes, and pieces of wood, marching...they were preparing a big pogrom in that night. And I went home in the dark with my aunt, and I came home and we heard the radio saying that it's preparing...and people started putting wooden pieces on the doors and covering up, and it was a terrible feeling that Kishinev was preparing itself for a big pogrom. And this was '38...the government, the head of the government of Romania was Cuza. Cuza was the head of the Iron Guardia[3]...it's called *Garda de Fehrer* [phonetic] in Romanian language...the Iron Guard of Nazis, with khaki uniforms, with brown bands on their hands...and they were walking on the streets with these villagers preparing the pogrom. And, because the head of the government...we had a king, but the head of the government was a Nazi...so in that night, the radio announced it that Cuza had a stroke and he is paralyzed and all his party and the government is falling apart...and the other day was Purim, and I still remember that the people, the Jews were dancing on the streets, that...because Cuza was called a Haman of Romanian...that God saved us from the other Haman like Cuza...

JF: So the peasants stopped their movement because...

CA: Because the party was like falling apart. They had to have orders from Bucharest what to do, and they didn't do it. This was our salvation, but I still remember, making iron pieces on the doors, and all the family came together to grandfather's house and there we closed up whatever we could, put things on the windows, and closing up the doors, and it was a silence in the streets all night because we didn't...and like after midnight, and all the people was at to the radio, they were announcing what happened to Cuza and that is the party is falling apart and they are making...how you call it? Elections, fast elections, who will be take over because the King give an order right away to choose another party and to make something. This was that night and this I remember. My parents, in the same time announced us that they are were coming home from

[3]Iron Guard, an extremist fascist movement in Romania, headed by Horia Sima. A. C. Cuza was head of the League of National Christian Defense in the 1920s who achieved political power together with Goga in 1937. This was a right-wing coalition under King Carol II which was responsible for antisemitic measures at the time.

Czechoslovakia because the Germans are coming to take over, and they came home. This was ‘38 and then ‘38 or ‘39 they were still performing, as I said before, in the teahouses or the wine gardens. You know it is a garden, but they are serving wine in that places. In these places we were performing. And 1940, summer, we were performing, we were in Czernowitz, in another place, and we heard...the Russians came in and took over. One morning the Russians came in and took over, with no warning or nothing. No. Not at all. The first tank went to the prison, to open the gates of the prison to let out all of the political people there. The second tank goes straight to the city hall. This is the two ways. The first two tanks, prison and city hall. To take over a town, this is the way they are doing it. And my father said he doesn’t want to be in Bukovina, because he heard that this will be Ukraine. He wants to be in Kishinev, because we heard this will be Moldavia. So, we try to leave Czernowitz in 1940 and no train we could go on. Full of military people, full of peasants moving from place to place. It was a chaos. Do you say chaos in English? It was a chaos not to describe, so we rented a wagon with horses, we put whatever we had. I told you we didn’t have nothing specially, no furniture and so on. And we start, and in every town all the roads were closed with wagons, with horses, with wagons with how you say, not cows, oxen. People were moving from place to place thinking that they don’t want to be in Moldavia, they do not want to be in Ukraine, they don’t want to be there, and they start moving. And the roads were closed, no food, you cannot find nothing to eat, and I remember, start selling certain things to achieve us little food. It took us what has to take six hours by train, took us a week to achieve Kishinev, to arrive in Kishinev. It was there. In 1940 when the Russians took over Bessarabia, right away the stores were emptied out of food, clothing stores were emptied out from clothing, because the Russian people start coming over from there and buying out everything. I remember women used to buy nightgowns and put them on as dresses. When we saw the first time this kind of thing we couldn’t imagine, because the Russian people didn’t have nothing there on the other side. They used to come over and the new achieve taking over towns and take everything they found in the stores. Right away all the stores were empty. And there were lines. Standing in lines, you know, the usual way, what the Russians have, standing in lines. So, but one thing was good part of it for actors. They right away formed the Yiddish State Theatre. Moldavian Yiddish State Theatre, and my father and mother were taken in in this theatre, and it was a theatre, an ensemble of 120 people. Actors, actresses, dancers, make-up, painters, seamstresses. A state theatre, and a state theatre takes 120 people, it’s by the government. There’s a good part from one side, I mean the financial part of the thing. And an actor dreamt oh, here...I can without trouble, only have in mind my, I have only to give my talents, the rest the government will take care of me. But it wasn’t this way at all. They were dreaming that it would be this way. Because you cannot perform what you want, you cannot interpret a part like you would like to, because the director has to put on you the how to do it. To be in the line of the country.

JF: The director was, then, not a native?

CA: No. He was usually a Russian. Right away we got one from Odessa, and after that we had one from, a non-Jew from Ukraine, that he put on the shows. We had one from Romania. What we know that in his young years he was a Communist, but a very good writer and director. So, then, it...for him, he was allowed to put on a revue or other little things, but usually they sent over directors from...and they sent even Jewish actors from Russia. They didn't have anymore theatres anymore too much in Russia. So they took their actors from Leningrad, like four, I remember, from Kiev, two, from different towns and they send it over to Moldavia to the new formed theatre. Because they didn't have Yiddish theatre in Russia. It was only one big theatre in Moscow. It was one in Odessa and it was only in Kharkov and the rest actors didn't have jobs so they took them and send them over to the new acquired territory.

JF: How many of these state theatres were set up in the newly acquired territories? Just the one?

CA: Two, one in Czernowitz because this was the province of Bukovina but they attached to Ukraine, and one in Kishinev what was called the Moldavian Yiddish Theatre.

Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape #2, side 1 of an interview with Mrs. Chayale Ash-Fuhrman on September 21, 1981.

CA: The Moldavian Yiddish Theatre, the new founded theatre, was till 1941, June 22nd, when the first bomb was thrown by the Germans on Kishinev.

JF: During the time of the Moldavian State Theatre, what kinds of things were restricted by the Russian directors, the Russian Government?

CA: It was restricted. First, they organized right away like a branch of the Communist Party in theatre. This was the first thing. Everyone had the feeling that he has to watch the next one. You know, like it's usually. They used to call people and the head of the theatre to call people, actors, saying, "How was the other actor? Is he good, is he talking about something?", is he... Always, like...wanting to take out, to find out how they're behaving, how they are doing. This is like it's a way of...you feel always watched, you feel always that somebody is watching and it may be that the other person is called and asked what is doing the other one. You know what it means, the atmosphere in general?

JF: The suspicion?

CA: The suspicion. To find out, because it's a new formed theatre, to find out what everyone what is thinking, what is doing, always the way. The second one, it was restricted...let's say, you have to be very careful to give an idea about a show, what couldn't find grace in their eyes. You had to do the show they want. You have to interpret the part...if you said this way you say, "Tch, tch, tch." This is not thinking the right way. You had to do it this way. They forced us to bring out in every show the social problem, if it wasn't one. We had to interpret it in such a way that it is one. You talked to your...like you always had...the tone to the balabos and the balabosta as to be in such a way like, asking for your social rights, or whatever it is. And this was, for an actor who performs for the sake of art, for performing, it was a very hard thing to do. To think politics in the time that you are rehearsing, the time that you are doing...in a show if a scene was, if a scene was in a factory of *talesim*, a guy is killed, they are making a strike and he is killed. They want to bring in the whole *talis* soaked in blood, that this is what the rich people did. Overdone, really overdone. The interpretation had to be overdone. And this, the actors didn't like it at all. Mostly in the beginning, you know, it was a terrible thing.

JF: Did they also eliminate certain plays?

CA: Absolutely.

JF: Which kind?

CA: They eliminate plays that they have religious contents. They would eliminate a play that looks positive on, let's say, on a owner of a factory. Even if the play has an owner of a factory. If he has positive sides, they would take it away. The play

couldn't go any more. They wouldn't allow certain writers. Like we used to perform from before...

JF: Which kinds of writers?

CA: Writers, they were typical, really Jewish culture. Like a lot of plays from Mendele Mocher Seforim. Y. L. Peretz was entirely taken away, because he was a rebel. He was the reformator of the Yiddish theatre. Taken away. You had to...they usually forced on us translations in Yiddish from Russian plays. The other way around, so, we had a lot of certain plays from Russia...I remember that we did a show about the partisans, we had a show about family thing, about Russian doctors and medicine, [unclear] was the name. And, it wasn't easy, it really was not easy for actors who coming from doing everything for everybody.

JF: What kind of feedback did you get from the Russian Yiddish, or Soviet Yiddish actors that you met, when you were performing with them under these new [unclear]?

CA: I tell you the truth. They were finishing up, some of them were finished schools, theatre institutes in Russia, but when they arrived, they weren't...first, they weren't talented. They were actors because they finished a theatre school, but they weren't talented at all. One thing, some of them. Second one, they, how you say it? they were like, how would you say? not knowledgeable of the Yiddish literature too much, not at all. They were speaking between them Russian language, even knowing that the actors do not understand, speaking between them.

JF: They didn't use Yiddish then?

CA: As a language between them, not at all. Not at all. And, they didn't understand...their Yiddish writing is a different orthography in Russia. Hebrew words, they wouldn't write like Hebrew words, they were transliterating it in Yiddish letters. They would write the word *chasene* with *chet, aleph, samech, ayin, nun, ayin,* like in Yiddish, not like in Hebrew. And they don't use the end letters. The end *tsadek, nun, kof*...they don't use that. They have a different orthography. So they were a lot fighting with actors. Why we are using this orthography. You have to use the Russian orthography. Yiddish orthography. When it came to rehearsal, getting a part, they were very like fighting-prepared. What would you say?

JF: They were competitive?

CA: They were competitive. Why you using the European Yiddish? Why you don't use the Yiddish from Russia?

JF: Were they comfortable with the ways the directors were handling...?

CA: The directors were Russians. The head, the producer, the head of the theatre was Russians.

JF: Were you able to have personal discussions with them, or was there a lack of communication between the two groups?

CA: With the Russians, you mean?

JF: With the Russian actors?

CA: Some of them. It was like two younger ones, they right away met younger actresses from Romania and they some of them even married, and some of them became friends, but with older ones it was impossible. They were so stubborn with certain things. Of thinking of interpretating certain things, parts, of they were really already spoiled, or would you say, or rotten, not spoiled, but rotten, with other things, what came from there, then with the thinking like you say, open. Theatre has to be the mirror of life. They didn't think about it this way. They were acting, like, mechanical. Nothing came from their soul.

JF: Did you have the impression that the theatre in Moscow was similar to this, or do you think that there was more creativity in that group?

CA: In art, it was very creative, because they had fantastic good actors and they had...the head of the theatre was a big, not big, big, I mean, in talent in interpreting Yiddish values and things on stage because that's maybe the reason he was killed. This was Michoels. Maybe this was the reason he was killed.[6] They saw in him something what has to be put away.

JF: Did you at any point have any connection with him?

CA: I had correspondence with him. The head of the theatre from Kishinev had prepared me, to send me, to Moscow to learn directing. And...I was a fantastic stage hand and director and this in the Russian theatre. I did everything. In the State Theatre, when it becomes the State Theatre in Kishinev. So, he said it would be good for me...you're born in theatre, you are raised on prop-milk. This was the way he said, but would be good to go to school, to have the theoretically everything, and I said, "I don't want to learn acting, I would like to learn directing." Because acting is something you cannot learn. So, he recommended me to Moscow to Michoels to go directing and Michoels wrote a letter. He would be happy to receive me, but what will be my means of living everyday? I mean, because the theatre cannot pay me while I go to school. And I wrote him a letter that I was a prompter and I can type...at that time, typing you know that kind of thing...No, that I can write Yiddish and everything. So he ask me if I can type. And I went to school for typing and this was May, 1941. And my mother sold...I remember to a Russian lady, then in '41, a big leather, nice pocketbook and gave me the money to go and enroll in this school for typing. And in '41, in June, I had to start September to school in Moscow for directing, and in June 1941 the war started. And I remember the letter to Michoels, it was this way written. I still know. "I send you a girl who will show you what Moldavia is."

JF: This was the letter from your director...?

[6]Shlomo Michoels was killed in a Soviet planned automobile accident in 1948, an event which ushered in the so-called Black Years in Soviet Jewish history.

CA: From my, what recommended me to the...to Michoels' school. And I knew that I will [unclear] to typing, typing parts, scripts, scenarios...this will give me a way, a means, of earning some money so that I can stay in the school.

JF: During that time, before the war started, what was your actual living condition like under the Russian occupation, other than the theatre?

CA: I remember we lived still in a furnished room.

JF: This is just your parents and yourself at this point?

CA: Yes. My brother was in a art school with, how you say? Intern. He lived there and he went to school there and I was alone with my parents in that time.

JF: Your grandparents...?

CA: Grandparents were in a little house far from us. We were more in center city. They were very far from us. The same way, very poor and alone. Grandfather died when the Russians came in, after a couple of months he died. This was my first funeral I came close to in my life. My grandfather's funeral. Grandmother survived the evacuation and died on the road, jumping from a train. Maybe this I will tell you later on, but I wasn't...my family told me how she died. She start internal bleeding because she was almost 80 years old and she jumped from a train and she got internal bleeding, and she died on the road afterwards. Yes...and but it was not, it was hard, it starts the time like usually the Russian way of life. Hard to find food, hard to find other things. For the theatre we didn't worry anymore, because it was the State Theatre, but we worried only about survival. It was hard to find food. You had to stay in lines. It was hard to find a pair of shoes, or clothing. It was standing in lines. Only if standing in lines, if the line is big, you know that until it comes your time the store is empty. This was the starting of...we didn't have it too long to really know what... We were in the beginning excited about the theatre, and start performing, doing certain things. Learning the parts and having problems...I know my father had a big problem being a very big actor in Romania all the time. They chose to use his artistic things more than the acting things. Having money to pay...the law there says that one person cannot get two wages, two pays, so he was enrolled as a make-up man and stage director and the artist, he performed but he wasn't in the book, it wasn't written as he's an actor.

JF: Even though he performed?

CA: He performed, he had the main part right in the first premier of the State Theatre. It was symbolically put on, the first show was Goldfaden work. This is *The Witch*. *The Babi Yachne*. So he had the part of the Babi Yachne. Michoels and Zuskin came from Moscow to see my father in this part. I had a picture, I gave it to the YIVO. I had a picture of the whole troupe together with Zuskin and Michoels and all and I gave it to the YIVO. To see him in this part, it was something out of this world. But still, he didn't get the title in the theatre. Wasn't actor. And he suffered very much about that. So having this whole problems, the other things was nothing for us.

JF: Why was he not listed as an actor?

CA: Because they needed him as a stage director. He was acting and taking care of everybody was going on the stage. And they couldn't pay him twice money.

JF: I see.

CA: So they decided to register him as a stage director and make-up man instead of actor. So they could put other people as actors. Because they had a certain quota, how many actors there has to be. But, in his heart, he wouldn't, he didn't want the money because he could get more money off this one, only to be as an actor. This was, his ego was very hurt. Very, very much. And he suffered a lot. But, the war saved him from this pain, as an actor to give him other problems.

JF: During that time did you also travel, or was the troupe stationed in Kishinev?

CA: We were in one town, Kishinev, and then we were in another town not far from it, what had a big theatre with stage. We could go in with this ensemble in that place. It's called Belz. A lot of people in America coming from Belz, their ancestors, this is a town...so, this is the two places we were.

JF: Now, is there anything else about that pre-war time that you want to add before we get into 1941?

CA: No. I think, from this, I think so many little things, my rememberings, that it will be good to go over because this is really the time '41 when the war started. We came to this point.

JF: O.K. Now, can you tell me what happened?

CA: In 1941 when it's the first bombs fell over Kishinev. Right away the head of the Art Department from Kishinev called all the actors to the theatre, made a meeting and said, "From this day on we don't perform anymore," and that the head of the Art is moving over to Kharkov because the Germans are coming closer and they are moving over... he Art Department is moving over. We were subsidized by the Art Department. We didn't know what will happen. We only were thinking they're moving over but we don't have to move. But, came an order the next day, the bombs start falling, you know, the town starts getting destroyed. So, all the actors, with their families, even uncle and aunts, came to the theatre in a...how you call it? when you are hiding in a time when bombs are falling?

JF: Like a bomb shelter?

CA: Bomb shelter. It wasn't a bomb shelter, but it was the underground of the theatre, where sceneries are standing and other things. Everyone came with his family, in this underground from the theatre, thinking what we shall do. Because the town will be taken over by the Germans. So, the Art is away. Nobody is there anymore from the government. We are alone. Who will take care of us? So we decided that we have to leave. And the theatre entirely went walking. Some took, you know, carriages, like it was in the old time with the horses, and before, and we went to the station. Coming to the station we were like 150 or 160 people. Somebody went into the head of the station and

asked for a wagon, for a train wagon, because we want to run away from town. And in that time when we were going to the station, half of the town was burning. The firemen with their autos were going out of town already. And then, we went out. When we come to the stations the authorities gave us cattle train wagon. And all the people went in this thing, this wagon.

JF: So these were still the Russian authorities?

CA: Yes, they are all Russian authorities. They help us evacuate in their train. All of us, we knew that in Kharkov is our government. The Art Department. So we went in the train, with idea to go to Kharkov. If it takes weeks, months, we have to go. We have to reach Kharkov. We weren't paid for the last month, other kinds of things. And, then, we'll know what to do. In this train, we were packed like sardines. Some people were, I remember, I start making...and somebody was with their foot on my face. And, in the same time, the Germans were bombarding the station. Everybody was down on the floor like this, and then I felt somebody had with their foot on my face. And it was little openings like, you know, [unclear] somebody was looking out, we were dragging them down. It was a panic in this train. Somebody tried, started to pulling us away from the station, and some of the family relatives were on the station and the families were lost. You know, we left Kishinev, some had their husbands on the station. They went down to bring some water, or they went down, I don't remember what it was, and they moved away the train when it was...the bombs were falling. And they took us to Tiraspol. Tiraspol...this is on the other side of the river Dniester, what is the border between...it was the border between Romania and Russia. So we went over, I still remember, it took hours to pass the bridge very slowly...they were afraid, the bridge over.

JF: Over the river?

CA: Over the river. And then we came on the other side Tiraspol, we came all together in the theatre. There was a theatre, in Tiraspol. A big theatre. Not Yiddish theatre but a big building, a big theatre. And, we settled in this theatre. Stopped running around for some food for the families, and other things, and in Tiraspol we went out to the station asking, "How can we continue our trip?" On the station were wagons, how they call? open platforms, you know, open platforms. They said we could sit on this platforms and continue our trip. So people were sitting on this platforms...you understand what I am saying?

JF: The platforms not on the track, by the side of the tracks?

CA: Yes. But this is platforms, open train, how you call them?

JF: Oh, they were open cars?

CA: Yes, open cars, we call it platform cars.

JF: O.K. Excuse me for one minute. Did this include, besides the theatre group itself, any other people from Kishinev?

CA: Some close relatives from the actors, who took with them.

JF: But, on this train, this specific train, were just...?

CA: No, not train. On the train was different, were people, were, how you call it. Merchandise of all kinds, even, how you call it? Soldiers, all kinds of things. And, we took platforms, several, and we went continued our...it was raining on the top, it was really-- we were in every station they were running down, you know, they were putting us away for days on the dead line, and people used to make fire outside and warm up a little water. And, you can imagine this picture, and people start going in the little stations in the towns selling things, so that maybe they'll find the bread, maybe they'll find cheese, maybe they'll find some other things, to continue the trip, to survive. And when we arrived to Kharkov we find out that all the Government ran away to Kuybyshev further, more in the back of the...because the Germans are already close to Ukraine.

JF: How long had it taken you to get from Kishinev to Kharkov?

CA: From Kishinev to Kharkov let me see. This was June and we arrived...when we came to Kharkov, it was August, beginning of August. So arriving to Kharkov, they didn't let us go further. They say they have...the fields are full with grain, and with other, with corn. The men are on the front, all the people from the trains, down in the *kolkhoz*. *Kolkhoz* means cooperative settlements. And they put us in their little villages. All the theatre. To help the people, the Russian people to take down the grains from the fields. My father, they gave a horse, because they found out that he can ride a horse, to be the security at night around the milk farms.

JF: What town were you in?

CA: We were in...I don't remember the town, I remember the neighborhood was *Krasnodarski krai*. Krasnodar neighborhood.

JF: Can you spell it for me?

CA: K-R-A-S-N-O-D-A-R. *Krai* means county, would you say, neighborhood. I don't say neighborhood, it's county. And this was in Ukraine.

JF: This was in the Ukraine?

CA: Yes. There we found out the first time what it means really hate for Jews. The villagers from the town, from this place, mostly the women, start talking, "Jews, you are not in the front fighting for us. You stay here in the back. You want to...you are hiding from the war." They didn't know that no Bessarabian, even young, was taken in the army. They didn't trust, from the occupied territory, to take in the army. Because I know if my brother, he was army age; they didn't want to take him.

JF: Your brother was with you?

CA: He wasn't with us, no. No. No he wasn't. He was in Kishinev and when the war started they mobilized...how you say it? Mobilization? Not in the front, in the anti-fascist club, to make posters for the army, anti-fascist posters, to design, to paint. This was his job to do it. He put on his nice suit, he said he goes to the army. When he came there, they say "Bessarabia? You cannot go in the front." And they took him away to this, in the back of the front, to the anti-fascist group to make these things. So, ideas...he had fantastic ideas, and he made these posters, because all the trains went to the

front had posters on the wagons. This was the propaganda what was going on. So he was in this anti-fascist propaganda called, the thing he worked with.

JF: Before the Russians and Germans were actually at war with each other, do you recall any attitude on the part of the Russians toward Germany, or what was happening in Germany before 1941?

CA: No. Only very...the really things about in the newspapers, real politic. We were very scared, afraid when we heard that Stalin made pact with Hitler. This was the first thing that we said, "*Oy*, a *bruch*." Like we say in Yiddish, "*Oy,* a *bruch*." Because Stalin was one who suppressed Jewish life and culture of a smaller form then later on, and Hitler on the other part, and they making a pact and we are in the middle. This is...people who were thinking about politics. But other people that didn't know and didn't react. Some people who react were aware of it. And, in this, I'm sorry, I'm going back, this *kolkhoz*, the first time, they took the rakes to us. The women...one woman took, took like this finger and she said in Russia, and I will say it in Russia so maybe people will understand, and future generations will listen to that: "[In Russian]" "I will scratch your eyes, you stinking Jew." This was what she say to me like this with two fingers, in my eyes. Why? I can understand a pain...her husband was in the front...but the first expression of hate came for the Jews. She wouldn't hate a government that send her husband to the front, but she gave all her hate to the Jews. That was the difference. And for the first time I saw...

Tape two, side two:

JF: This is tape two, side two of an interview with Mrs. Chayale Ash-Fuhrman.

CA: Like I said, I repeat maybe given to the other part, that first time I saw my mother the actress, the prima-donna, working on a tractor. I was young, with other children, I mean, sons and daughters of actors. We were working on the fields. It was for us a little easier because we were young, but seeing my mother and my father and the horse or other actors. I saw first grade actors carrying bricks, working around, so I felt so, so sore inside because I really, I love actors. People who gave their life for theatres. And, here I saw that he is taking, making bricks from...how you call it? dirt of cows on the farm, manure, and they are and I saw my mother staying in a big hole, you know, with manure, and they add water and they are stamping with the feet making bricks from that. And I saw with my own eyes and I suffered, not for me, I was young, I could work, and for me getting up and working with the girls and boys together singing when we were working, it's a different atmosphere than seeing old actors and actresses doing labor on the fields where they never, they wouldn't dream about it, they don't know it. And second, first one, their bodies, even, is no use for this kind of physical work, but some of them died and some of them survived.

JF: Where were you living?

CA: In little houses like huts, from the peasants.

JF: With the peasants?

CA: No, no. They gave us. This called houses for refugees, refugee houses.

JF: What were they like?

CA: The houses? Little huts, with nothing in it like a wooden bed. I had in my house, I took it away, an icon, you say? an icon or an other thing. A little peasant house. This wouldn't be the bad part of it if we would...I remember we had bread. This was the most important thing. We didn't have a lot of things to the bread, but bread we had. A loaf of bread was given to everyone on the field when he was working. If somebody didn't go to work he didn't get a bread. So, let's say if somebody didn't go, he was sick...people used to share the piece of bread with that person. We had sometimes...we had luck, my family. Father was riding on the horse around the farm and early in the morning when the girls start milking the cows they gave, when they made the butter, from the churn, they used their hands to clean out the remnants, and put them in a little dish and he took it home so we had a little bit adding to it, you know.

JF: What kind of work were you doing in the fields?

CA: You know, when a tractor is working, one side is throwing out hay and one side comes the grain. It used to say, let's say, like a wooden case with handles and the grains fall out and every time you take this manual...Imagine in this times, so not modern, the people carry away these cases on a big, how you say? mountain of grain, you

know, to put it one, to give it down. We were standing where the hay is, with a fork, a certain fork, taking away so that the tractor doesn't get stuck. Used to take all the time to push it away, to push it away. And other people made squares, you know, packages in that to put them away. This was to... And I remember, even I didn't have it, all the time I felt hay on my body. You was scratching, you was itching, in my eyes, in my hair, I had always this, how you call it, dust of hay on me. And, I remember, I came home they didn't have a bath tub, or certain things, it was a big barrel, very big barrel with water. I used to go in this barrel and make my bath after the work. What it was, for a young person it was really, it was not nice, it didn't matter. I was in a barrel, the moon is shining outside, [unclear] and you know, sleeping like a log, you know, and this is the condition what we had. And...but older actors, it was terrible for them to work. They came home hurting every inch of the body, working this kind of thing, but this was only till November.

JF: Till November of 1941?

CA: Yes. Taking down of the harvest.

JF: During that time, did you meet any Jews, Russian Jews who were living in that area?

CA: No. No. No. Later on we met. Then, in November, they stopped doing that. We knew that our government is in Kuybyshev. So, we were on again came out to the station...we sent somebody [unclear], we chose people, and they gave us again a train with tanks what are coming back to the front for repair. So in this platforms were tanks, what they're working, but they can shoot, the cannons on the top are working, but the motors for the thing itself is not working. So they were sent back for repair. So we were...who could catch, some people in one wagon and some in the other one, and we were on this wagon. And on the wagons were hay, you know, straw, and the tanks on the top, and we used to sleep...I used to sleep under the tank. It was raining, I went under the tank all the time, and I remember we came to a town Rostov. It was bombarded by the Germans. So the train stopped and the soldiers jumped inside the tanks and start shooting to these planes and we were under the tanks, and I felt all the time ewww...like this. I was shaking, but we were still under the tanks until we arrived. But before Kuybyshev, we found out that our government is not anymore in Kuybyshev. The Russians went very fast...the Germans. They are in Asia, so we start going to Tashkent. Tashkent has the other name, the "city of bread." What can be nicer? [Russian], the "city of bread." What can be better than the "city of bread" for us? So, we start traveling to the "city of bread." And we arrived there. We met tens of thousands of people around on the station. You know what it means a station that's in the time of war? They are like ants. Sleeping in the station, sleeping under the benches, sleeping in the garden outside from the station. They were in lice. Everywhere you look you see lice. You can see them going on the benches. It's because people were dressed up with everything they had sometimes. And it was...arriving only on the station. So we found out that in Tashkent our government

would pay us what it owes for the last month we worked in Kishinev, but the theatre doesn't exist anymore, everybody can go and do whatever they want. My father decided that we would go to a *kolkhoz*. Because we didn't have hunger in *kolkhoz* in Ukraine. He was thinking that in *kolkhoz* we would have at least food.

JF: You did meet up, then, with the director of the government?

CA: With the government, yes. No, somebody from our group went there, took the money, brought us all the last payment what we had before the war, but the theatre doesn't exist anymore. We are free. So my father decided that he wants to go to a cooperative village, to *kolkhoz*, like I said. And, we went to a *kolkhoz* village called...and you know where Tashkent is? Tashkent is near the border of Afghanistan. Uzbekistan. This is the border. And when we came in this *kolkhoz*, they sent us on the fields to take down the frozen cotton. You know cotton isn't closed up. Summertime from the sun they open up, they open, so you can pick the cotton. You have a sack in front of you and you pick the cotton, and you put them in the sack. But when the cold starts a little earlier, this doesn't open up. You have to take them down like they are. They are dried in special rooms with heat, and you open by hand and take down the cotton. And this was the work they put in this *kolkhoz*, all the refugees.

JF: About how many of you stayed together to go to this *kolkhoz*...?

CA: We were like two families. And these places we met already other Russian families who run away from Russian towns.

JF: Jewish families?

CA: Jewish families. From Kharkov, from Kiev, because it was already occupied by the Germans. And, but they survived easily. Easier, I mean. Why? The reason? They were used to the life of Russia. The black market, to the stealing, wherever they were working they were stealing, going out in the market selling, buying, combinators[?]. Things what we didn't know...we had to get used we knew it very well later on in '42 and '43, but in the beginning we didn't know nothing.

JF: What was their attitude towards you? Were they helpful, were they critical?

CA: No, no. Russians, in general, you find it today, too, are very selfish. This is because-- I don't blame them-- because of survival. Because of survival, they will talk on their neighbor. Because of survival they will steal. Because of survival they don't give a damn of another Jew. Because this is the reason Jews from-- Russian Jews that are coming today, the newcomers, they have to change their attitude against Jews. The Jews from Russia what are here in America, they don't mind what happened to a Jew in Russia back. They don't mind. They wouldn't give a penny for-- the same money that brought them, they wouldn't help with money even if they had to bring other Jews from Russia. Do you know that? They won't give a penny for Israel.

JF: So, when you were with these other families, they were not helpful to you, in learning?

CA: No. They do their own way. They know that they have to find a bottle of vodka, and go to the head of the *kolkhoz* and they didn't have to work so hard. Things what we didn't know. You understand? Things we didn't know at all. That you have to bring a bottle of vodka or a carton of cigarettes and you can talk to the *presidate* [phonetic] from the *kolkhoz* to give you several days free. So you can go to another town and make speculative things, buying, selling, doing...we didn't know that. This was a way of life in Russia. They knew that, so, it was easier for them, I mean, easier because it wasn't different. The town was different, but the way of survival...They lost, maybe, dear ones in the war, what they suffered. But they didn't suffer from the economic part, because they knew how to turn around.

JF: What language were you communicating in?

CA: Mostly Yiddish and Russian. Russian and Yiddish.

JF: They spoke Yiddish?

CA: Some of them, yes. Some of them, yes. Because before, they had schools, Jewish schools in there. When we arrived in Tiraspol, what I said before, I was a friend with a girl there, a nice girl, that she was a teacher in a Yiddish school and she said the school closed up, not because-- the government there did not close certain institutions. They are warning the people who are going to the schools, to the parents. "Don't send your kids to school." They making trouble on his job because the kids go to a Jewish school. So if the kids-- if the school doesn't have any kids to the new year, they close it up. The same thing with the newspaper. They make it the way that, "Look, nobody send their kids, we have a right to close it up." For the world opinion, they have the right to do it. Nobody...but they didn't say that on his job, they said to the man, "Look, you want to advance in your job, you want to do this, you want to [unclear] don't send anymore your kid to the Jewish school. It's reactionary. [unclear]" So he stop sending it. Because people even stopped staying that they had relatives in America. Do you know that they have a line, and if you fill out a form in Russia it's written, "Do you have relatives in America?" You have to say "Yes" or "No." Some people said "No" even they had. And they stopped receiving letters. They forced them so the schools close by themselves. The same thing they were with the newspaper. They stop taking the newspapers, go to the grocery and other things, they use them as paper. They have a form of suppressing things so you don't...not to blame them. If you remember, you saw the movie "Holocaust." Like the Germans look the way, so for the world, it looks legally, the things they did. This is the way of looking, a way out for the world, for the correspondents, newspaper men will look at it legally, the things they are doing it.

JF: Were there non-Jews, also, in this group you were working with in the cooperative?

CA: No. No. It was only the Uzbeks, but we suffered a lot of hunger. They had to gave us every day 300 gram of bread and a certain soup. They used to boil a big kettle of soup and we go out and take, you know, how you say? a container of soup. It was

more water than soup, but this is the way it goes. And a refugee in Russia, you could see him on the waistline near his belt...This container, with a spoon always tied down here, not to lose it, and we used to make the containers from tin cans. This was the containers and this was the symbol of a refugee, having a container or something, a spoon tied down here, because if you came in a cafeteria style place, the spoons were tied down to the table because people used to take the spoons with them. So this is the way...usually we always, it's in our mind, will always be the tin container with the spoon. We always carried around with us. And I never believed that exists a world without lice. I didn't believe that. You went to the bath, you used to get a little ticket like to go to the bath from the working place, you know, and you never realized, that you went in to bath...you know what kind of bath they had...like tap water with a little basin that you put the water like this, you throw the water on yourself. You know. Or they were wooden...and they had always holes in it. And until you went to the bench with this, the water wasn't in, and you put on your clean clothes, you know, and the time you were dressing, they used to put your clothes in a disinfectant tub. You know? To disinfect, un-lice it, as you call it. And when you put on the things, you walk out, you had them again. Because you couldn't...the nit was in the seams and everywhere. I had them in the seam of...I had one pair of panties I had them right here, and I used to wash them in cold water and put them on again. So, I didn't...for three years I didn't see a piece of soap. I didn't see it.

JF: You were in this cooperative for three years?

CA: No, no, no, no. From the cooperative when we start...I found out that the head of the *kolkhoz*, of this cooperative, is getting sacks of rice and another grain. [Russian] it's called. It's a form of Asian grain rice. That he is putting them away, stealing them, putting them away and he lets the refugees starve. So I decided I have to go to the head of the county or whatever it is, like City Hall, and tell the truth, what is going on. But I will never return to the cooperative again. I was afraid because I want to tell what's going on. So I went there with another son of our actors, together, we were the young rebels, we saw what was going on. We went to the town and we told them, "Look, this and this president is taking away, in Russia, a president of the *kolkhoz*, he takes away, we found out, he takes away and he has a hole in the hut, in the ground, and he puts the sacks in and then he makes big parties and they are drinking with all the, with people, they were roasting a lamb, and making pilaf, (you know like in Asia they are doing it) and we were hungry." And I found it out, and I told them, but we decided we didn't go back. Because we don't know, maybe he will take revenge on us, or it will be bad for our families, whatever.

JF: And your family was still there.

CA: Still there. We went in town and after I said it, I heard...and then my family told me, that he was arrested, they found his thing there, and he was sent away for prison for many years, somewhere, I don't know. My mother came to me in the town to stay with me and my father went in another place. And I tell you what happened to my

father. He got a little, from hunger, he got a little sick, nerves were very sick. Usually women supported at that times, in the hungry times, a lot easier than the man. For a man it is very hard to change his routine life, and it is everything. A lot of suicides between men, not women at all. Is what happened in that time. They didn't see a way out. They always say, maybe there will be hope. I was young, I didn't have shoes, I went barefoot three miles to dance with a group for dancing with boys and girls and other things. But fathers, they couldn't swallow the whole things were going on in life. Life without theatre was nothing for him at all. And he shaved his head. He didn't have nothing to wear, and he went on the markets, he was stealing. I had a piece of bread and I got 300 grams, so I used to eat a little piece in the morning and put away a piece under my pillow, and he used to steal from me and my mother a piece of bread. He was not rational at all, he didn't know what to do from hunger. He went on the market and he took down his pants and he gave it away for like sour milk, a container of sour milk. He decided to went in a place Fergana, this is even closer to Afghanistan border. He heard that some actors are there and it's a factory of silk and they were painting the silk and all kinds of things and he said that maybe there I can do it. But he came there and from the paint, from the thing, he got...how would you say? diarrhea.

JF: From the chemicals, you mean?

CA: Chemicals there, and from eating grass from the fields. I ate leaves from the field. I used to take from the field greens, they said it was menta (mint)... Asian people using leaves of menta in their tea, leaves of menta in their food. We heard that this is good for eating, we used to...not in the tea, we used to make a lot and mix...we used to get instead of 300 gram bread, we used to get sometimes 400 gram flour. So, for 400 gram flour comes out 300 gram bread. We used to take a little flour and mix with the leaves and make like little patties outside, and a lot of people got sick from it. I used to get...better say, steal *zhemuch* [phonetic]...it's in Russia...this is the residue when they are squeezing oil, cotton oil. They make oil from cotton, you know that, from the seeds of cotton, it's now oil. The residue of this is like yellow bricks. It's like squeezed and it's yellow, this I used to eat. A lot of refugees ate *zhemuch* [phonetic]...we still remember that. Some people survived, and some people had diarrhea. And, I remember my father got diarrhea, dysentery from *zhemuch* [phonetic]. This was a time that we found out where my brother is. He was in Kushka at the border with Iran working in the same club, anti-fascist propaganda. So my brother came and we went to see how my father is and we found him like a zombie, like you see from the concentration camps. So we took him on a wagon, we borrowed from a neighbor a wagon, with two big wheels, we put my father...and me and my brother were in it and we went with him to the hospital. Later on we found out, a lot later...they did not announce it, nothing...that my father died...they put him in a grave with other 50 people what died because there was epidemic, you say, of dysentery and then they took them out altogether in the grave with...how you call this white...what you're painting houses, paint, white paint.

JF: Whitewash?

CA: Is it called whitewash? Not paint, it's what you put in water and it boils like...you taking from the paint. Oy, I forgot, in Jewish it's called *kalach*. They usually paint the houses with it. Now we have sophisticated paint.

JF: I think it is whitewash. [lime]

CA: And it was on the people...they were pouring this for not spreading the epidemic.

JF: Do you have any idea what year it was that he died?

CA: He died in '42.

JF: In '42.

CA: Yes.

JF: And where?

CA: He was 48 years old.

JF: And what town?

CA: Margeland.

JF: Do you know how that was spelled?

CA: M-A-R-G-E-L-A-N-D. When I open up a map sometimes, I like to look through with my fingers where Tashkent is, where Margeland is, where Kushka is. All these places I walking with my finger and remembering...and still I survived with my mother. We had malaria, we suffered terrible from malaria. I remember the first time I saw my mother naked in a bath. We were to bath together and my mother was a nice, plump, *geshmacke* actress, you know...and I came to the bath with my mother and I saw her naked and I start crying, and I run away from the bath, because I couldn't...like the same look like you had on the people when you see from the extermination camps. Because some people don't think that being in the war in Russia, in a labor camp, or living there was, besides the killing, like it was with this, that it was different for a Jew. My mother looked the same way. I remember that she looked yellow from malaria. The body was yellow from taking quinine, how you call it quinine in medicine?

JF: Quinine.

CA: Yes, we used to take so many big doses of quinine that I was yellow and she was yellow.

JF: You were able, then, to get medication?

CA: They gave us tablets. Very primitive tablets of quinine, that how you call it?

JF: This is still in the commune, now?

CA: Yes. And. We did...how you call it? Some people colored things with them. Yes, because, I remember once...I didn't have any dress on my body, nothing, really only pair of panties...my mother was in the cotton, where they are packing the cotton in balls, you know...You see it in the movies, sometimes. So, they are packing it with their feet. The more you can stuff in a ball the better it is. So my mother was inside

stuffing and I had to watch my mother, yellow from malaria, standing and stuffing this. She stole a white sack from cotton, she put it around her body in the toilet, and she went out because every factory in the wartime had security with arms, because everything was, everything for the front. Everything for the war. Everything for the country. Nothing private. So, she put it on, she could be shot, put it on on her body and she brought it home. I took, how you call it? the pencils they are lilac, chemical, they write, you used to wet them and they write like...

JF: Colored pencils?

CA: It's not a colored pencil...you don't have it in the United States. I don't know that. Like chemical, a crayon, a crayon, but inside is violet, how you call it? it's a violet-like any crayon, any pencil is inside, like grayish-brown.

JF: The lead.

Tape three, side one:

JF: This is tape three, side one of an interview with Mrs. Chayale Ash-Fuhrman.

CA: Yes, when my mother brought me this sack home, cotton sack, I took a pencil, this violet pencil, and I mashed it. I made it in powder and I boiled water and I colored the sack violet, purple. And by hand, I made myself a little dress. This was my dress that I went dancing with. This is the only thing and on my feet I had a pair of slippers what I made them myself from pieces of cotton and other...and I didn't have no socks, but I was young, nothing mattered, only to survive.

JF: Now, this dancing group mentioned before...

CA: Not group. In every town, refugee young people meet. They used to sing songs, play the balalaika, dancing...you know these kind of things.

JF: They were all Jewish refugees that you are talking about?

CA: Yes. Yes. So I knew that, let's say, three kilometers...this would be like two miles...it's there, a group that you can meet young people and you can together dancing. So with this violet dress, like a jumper style, with cotton slippers, fabric slippers, I went dancing. I remember one day I get an attack of malaria in the middle of the road. I used to lay down on the road, on the sidewalk, lay down for half an hour, until it stopped shaking and then you are all sweat after the shaking stops from malaria, you are all sweat out, I wiped my face, I straightened out, and I continued my way to the dancing. This is things I can't...I will never forget, like I never forget up to today. When I am in a bathtub, that I had lice, and when I open up my bedsheets, they are clean with flowers, beautiful, that they are clean, and for three years I didn't see a piece of soap. This is things some people forgot. I can't. When I see these things, I cannot forget. And still today maybe this the reason I am a little fat. I'm aching, I'm sick when I have to throw out food. I cannot do that. I don't know why. I'm full but I still cannot throw it out. I will keep it in the refrigerator maybe for longer, and then I'll throw...I can't because I was stealing from a garden, cucumbers, tomatoes, with the mud, with everything, but I didn't carry them out. I was wiping off the mud like this and eating up. In the vegetable garden. And it's another thing, what means strength. All my youth I suffered from colitis. I couldn't eat cucumbers, raw vegetables, no drinking milk. I was terrible with colitis. But the moment I start my pilgrimage as a refugee, I ate everything and I was healthy like a...how would you say it. I don't know the expression...*Gesundt vi a ferd.*[8] Nothing. I was eating raw, dirty cucumbers. Nothing happened to me. Sometimes it was a time that I was praying to God to get sick. To get a leave...how you say, how you say, free for two or three days from work on the fields. Some I was...in the hospital, at least, I'll have a bed, because in Asia we slept on the floor. They don't sleep on beds, they don't eat on tables.

[8]Healthy as a horse.

Usually they sleep only on the floor. They have a lot of blankets, quilted blankets, and they are sleeping on them. And people from the little village gave for the refugees old blankets for everyone, and it has holes. You know, the cotton's outside...

JF: What was the attitude of the villagers towards you? The natives?

CA: In the beginning, very good. In the beginning, I mean, they respected us, European. They considered themselves Mongolian, Asians. They respected us very, very much. Until young Uzbeks start coming back from the front. Start talking. "They are killing their Jews. There has to be a reason for that." They start introducing the hate they got on the fronts. They start looking differently. Even, I remember, an expression from a young Uzbek, because I learned, I spoke beautiful Uzbek language. I learned it fast and I forgot it very fast. And they used to, I remember...he said [to] us: "Why do they say in Germany that every Jew has a long nose?" Stupid questions, but they came already with the poison inside them, because they were together with the soldiers there, on the fronts from Germany, even the population from Ukraine was hating Jews. To being with the Ukrainian people together, Uzbek with the Ukrainian soldiers and other soldiers...Some came back from the hospital, some was wounded, and they had inside all the seeds of antisemitism. This started approximate '43, middle '43, after the Russians start throwing them back from Stalingrad. There was a big battle of '43 from Stalingrad and the Russians start going back, throwing back the Germans. Then a lot of soldiers came, the territories were freed, the Germans were already in that territories.

JF: The Germans were in the territory where you were living?

CA: Not in Asia, no, there was the [unclear]. But the Russians start going back, they freed Ukraine, they freed Krasnodar...these places and the population there was already full of poison from the Germans, because the Ukrainians are antisemitic and a lot of the people are antisemitic, the Russian people...So, they got how you say? good teachings from being occupied by the Germans.

JF: How did this change the villagers' behavior towards you once the soldiers came back?

CA: Usually...to me personally it was different. I'll say you why in general. They use their life, if you know the Uzbeks, are still like the Islam. Their religion was Islam before the Russians came in, I mean. They still have the mosques...but this is the way. The door is always open. If a stranger passes by, he can come in, and if they are eating in that time, they ask him to the table. You know? Sometimes I was looking where is going...how you call it? smoke. So, then you know they are eating. So you know you are always welcome. To go to eat with them together. They are eating from one plate of pilaf, you put your finger, everyone eats from the same plate. Everybody is drinking the tea. The herb tea from the same cup. It's not a cup, it's like a bowl. You're sipping, and you give the other one, the other one's sipping, and you give to the third one, so around sitting around the table, and the wife is never together with the husband. Like in Islam. She is near the oven. She feeds the kids. There are a lot of kids. She feeds the kids and

the husband with friends, whatever. But when a new person came, even a women, they still invited me to sit together with them.

JF: So European women were included even though their own weren't?

CA: Yes. It was a little change. [unclear] But when it started, the start of feeling a little antisemitic, or rejection of the refugee...I will take it all together...they stopped inviting you. You could pass by and if you went in, "Do you wish something, you want something?" and sent them away. "Not inviting anymore today." [unclear] The tone was a little different from the Uzbek people. For myself, it was a little different. Why? I invented an idea to survive. They put on little hats for the babies. Usually their babies have always all kind of skin problems. Eye problem, you know, that kind of because, the cleaning, the hygiene is not...Little babies, you can see them with things on their head. Shaved, the head is shaved, because even the men are shaved. And they used to always close them up with little bonnets good one, bad one [?]. I took a skirt from my mother. I tore it apart and I sew little bonnets. And on the top little buttons or something. A clean button from the pants I could put on the top or other things. And I used to take this little bonnet when I saw the smoke coming out. "I came, I brought a little gift for you for the baby." Then they invited me already for...it was a little different...or I was sitting with the wife and she gave me a little bowl with this kind of soup or whatever it is. It was really...you were so inventive to survive that nobody can even imagine these kind of things, that a person can be so inventive for this kind of things. And this helped me out for a certain time in the cooperative. Then I found out that I can...they found out from me that I am, how you call it, I can sew, and they took me in, in a sewing cooperative, and again, a man with an arm outside, [?] because everything we were sewing there was sent to, was for the army.

JF: Was this in the same...?

CA: No, this was a *kolkhoz*, this was like a town, a little town. The name was Begovat.

JF: How do you spell that?

CA: B-E-G-O-V-A-T...I still correspond with some people that I met in Begovat. Coming into this cooperative, they were sewing, how you say? not shirts, not pajamas and not shirts...like what you put on for a soldier when he is in the hospital. Like a cover up, a top and a pair of pants. You had to make the norm to get your bread, 48 shirts, in 8 hours. Forty-eight. They are coming from the cutter and you are making it. Imagine a machine in 1942. They still didn't have automatic machines. With the feet, you have to go with your feet on the machines, sewing. And how can you make a norm when you go by the machine, with your feet like this? But I achieved 56 shirts and I got 100 grams more bread. This was my achievement for making more shirts. Then we start sewing quilted jackets for the soldiers, for the army. And I was very good on that. Knowing the Uzbek language, they chose me to go and learn textile. And I said, "Textile? I'll get food in the school? The best place to go!" The mind in your head didn't

work for nothing. At night, at day, when you are awake, only food. This was the only thing a person could think of. Food.

JF: You were separated from your mother at the time that you went to the sewing cooperative?

CA: Yes. Yes. A little later, I took her...she came to my place, I was living in a...how would you call it? Underground barracks, like you see them in the cold countries, they make it underground. Sixty people in a barrack. People dying in the barrack, kids were born in this barrack. And we lived separated, like straw mats between the families, and then, when I got this I brought my mother to me and we lived there.

JF: Were you still with primarily Jewish refugees, in the cooperative, as well?

CA: Yes, Jewish refugees.

JF: Was there any kind of ritual that was practiced? Any Jewish ritual?

CA: I will tell you. When it came...we didn't know almost dates when something is happen. The only things from some, we knew, when it was *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. We had a guy between us and he was the cantor and in a house we were practicing *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Prayings, and after awhile this guy who prayed was...they didn't arrest all the people who came to the synagogue, they arrested the cantor. And he was sent away to Siberia or whatever. Who knows where he went? They couldn't arrest 200 people for practicing, but if they would arrest the *chazan*, nobody to make the prayers anymore. The same system. So, the *chazan* was arrested. There was another guy but we'll pray and...without books. Because without books if somebody from the older ones remembered, they were saying, and we were listening, because we didn't have *siddurim* at all, nothing, and in the house where we pray...And another thing, everyday, in another house, because it was illegal. So, every day we went in another house. If they catch us this is the first time, so always we went in another house.

JF: What else did you celebrate besides the High Holidays?

CA: Beside the High Holidays, we knew when it's *Pesach*, but we didn't have any *matzo* because it was very far away. Maybe the Jews in the big towns like Tashkent had it, because the synagogues there, and it's a Jewish community there, and the Bukharan Jews, the Jews of Bukhara, are very, how you say? practicing Jews. Maybe there, yes, but not where I was.

JF: Were you able to get any news of what was happening in Europe?

CA: We only had the news...I tell you in this Begovat, I married my first husband. He was working. We didn't have a lot of Jews, the marrying kind, you know what I mean. And he was the only one there, a good worker, a Stakhanovist, one who makes more than the norm. You know what is this. This is a very big title in Russia, to work more than they ask for. He was working very hard...and he left a wife and a child in Poland. And then we met, we said to each other, "If your wife and child survives, you are free to decide whatever you want to do. At least now we are together." Why did we say

that? In that time, in 1942, it was formed an army from Polish citizens in Russia to go and fight on the Polish territory against the Germans. It was called Polska Armya. So a lot of them went to the fronts, and a lot of them, after, if they were wounded, they were in the hospitals in Russia, so they brought the news that the Jews were killed, ovens, concentration camps, not the direct ovens like we knew later on. That the Jewish population were killed by the Nazis. My ex-husband had a family with seven brothers. Nobody's alive. Absolutely nobody. And he said, he told us, the [unclear] told us what is going on there. So, then, we decided that if his wife or his child will survive, after the war, or somebody will be...because my ex-husband always dreamt that his child is somewhere living among non-Jews. So, when we come back after the war, I was the one to look in the newspapers, to look in organizations, to ask in churches, maybe because he was, five years old, I think, four or five years old that little boy when he left...And he left because their father...their town was occupied by the Nazis in Poland. And, they cut away his beard together with a piece of his flesh of his face. He was an old man, he went too early to the synagogue. So, he took all his sons and he gave them a wagon and he said, "You have to run away." Old people and children and women they wouldn't do nothing, so all the brothers run away, but they were on the border and they didn't let them cross to the Russians. Everybody went back to their families and they were killed by the Germans. Only one, my husband, only son what came other side and survived. He is still alive. He's in Israel. The father of my son.

JF: He snuck over the border?

CA: Yes.

JF: His name was?

CA: Pesach. They called him, now in Israel Paul, Pesach.

JF: And his last name?

CA: Ziskind, this is the name of my children. Z-I-S-K-I-N-D. So we knew after these Polish soldiers came back what happens, what happened, more or less, we knew. The Jews were killed. In the concentration camps, labor camps, but nobody knew about extermination camps.

JF: Not until after the war?

CA: Because labor camps were in Russia too. We knew that they concentrated Jews, because we knew even in '32, '33, '34, they had concentration camps in Germany. We knew about concentration camps in all the territories they occupied, but nobody knew about extermination. If somebody died, or he was killed, or because he was against Nazism, he was a communist, you know, or he died because of sickness or starvation...but nobody knew about extermination camps, about the gasses, and about this kind...nobody knew about that until we came back from Russia to Poland. Thanks to that, that my ex-husband was Polish citizen, we could go...leave Russia, as an exchange of citizens. After the war, Russia made an exchange. All Russians on the territory there

came back and all the Polish people in the Russian territory was sent back if he wants. Back to Poland.

JF: And you were included in that?

CA: I was included because I was married to him. I usually, after the wedding, when I married him, I still used my Averbuch maiden name, but, when we found out that Polish people can leave, I right away changed my name in his name so we could leave the country. And I took my mother with me too.

JF: Let's back up for a minute. Ah..., you married him in 1942?

CA: Yes.

JF: And you were living at this time still in the area where...

CA: Can I make a correction?

JF: Sure.

CA: I married him in 1943.

JF: Was he also working in the same commune as you?

CA: No, he wasn't. I met him where I was sewing in Begovat, this was a little town. He was an auto mechanic. He worked as an auto mechanic. And I tell you what I [unclear]. They found out that I know to write and read Russian language, so they took me out from the sewing department and they put me on a department what builded...how you call it? metallurgic factory, to where they are making steel. Steel factory, how you call it? It is not called factory.

JF: Mill.

CA: Yes, steel mill. I became their clerk, all of a sudden, knowing Russian language, they made me a clerk. Because in this five years, I was there, '41, '45, a little less, went through so many trades, and so many things, you know, that I sometimes say, "only two months I was this, only two months I was that." You cannot imagine what it is. And I was, how you call it, a clerk. This clerk means...how would you call somebody who checks the working people out on their jobs? This is a job in Russia. You go around with a book with names, finding out if the people are on their jobs. If they are not on their jobs, you are to find out where they are. If they are sick, they have to bring a paper from the doctor. If they are not sick, they are declared deserters. Because, the whole life in Russia and the war was a front. And if you didn't come for three-four days to your job, if you came with a certain paper or whatever it is, then I had to make a report as a deserter. This was my job. So, I went on the rails from the train what were carrying this steel and checking on more than 2,000 people if they are on their jobs. And I used to tell them...it was so hard for me to make a report as a deserter, I could die. How can I write such a thing? I used to tell them, "If you have to do something, if you have to go in market to sell your cow, because there was Uzbek people working there, if your wife is pregnant and you want to help, you got, whatever you have to do, tell me. Tell me, so, if the head will ask me, where is this and this and this, I can say he asked permission he's there and there. Not leave your job without saying what you are doing, where you are. If no, I have

to make a declaration as a deserter." So the Uzbeks loved me enormously, and I start living up, in what sense? One Uzbek brought me a dozen eggs, one Uzbek peasant brought me, like a little handkerchief, a little rice or whatever it is. You know...it was...and this helped me a lot. Then came the time that I married my...he was a mechanic on this mill. An auto mechanic. Because, I could think about such a thing. Because, I wasn't hungry anymore, like I was before. And I start meeting with this, and I start preparing groups for amateur, for performing. Why did it? Because they used to give...they didn't pay for that, but they give a, how you call it? a prize, a premium, three yards of fabric, a pair of American shoes. They got from America for the army, soldier shoes. So, if I want a prize, they gave me a pair of American soldier shoes.

JF: Who are you referring to now? Who is they? Who could give this prize?

CA: Russian people. The government.

JF: The government itself?

CA: If I call "they," it's Russia. [laugh]

JF: You started an amateur...?

CA: Not I started. I start preparing, let's say if they have a big holiday May 1st. May the 1st is a holiday. November the 7th is a holiday. I mean a state holiday. And they have amateur groups that they are preparing for entertaining for this holiday. Let's say, a man is speaking about [unclear] you know, and then comes a little entertaining. A little concert. So we didn't have concert, but for this occasion I had like all Jewish guys, a group of Jewish boys and girls, some married, some have a little baby already, and we made a little revue. And we made a little Jewish and a little Russian. Altogether. Small ones. I got a pair of American boots from a soldier. I sold them in a market and bought for myself some other thing. This was already in '43, as long the Russians start pushing the Germans.

JF: They let you do this?

CA: They had this amateur group. They had amateur groups with talents that went to perform for the soldiers. They wouldn't send Jews there. They wouldn't send Russian refugees there. They sent their actors from, from...I mean good actors from Moscow, Leningrad or Kharkov. They were groups like you send here to Vietnam, they sent on the front to perform for the soldiers.

JF: Did you have any knowledge of what was happening with the Yiddish theatre during those years in Russia?

CA: It wasn't...it didn't exist. It wasn't. In that years they...Moscow, even the government, the actors of Moscow was in Tashkent. They had, sometimes, concerts on single basis. I know some actors who stayed in Tashkent worked with a show or two from time to time, semi-professional. The government didn't gave them all the support. Something that is there to make for the people. But this happened in a big town like Tashkent. Tashkent is like the Moscow of Middle Asia, what is there. And we didn't dream about playing, performing, where I was, but in '43...Why? I got three yards of

Japanese silk because they had Japanese prisoners of war in there, and they used me...I understood Italian a little bit, because on this mill, what I said, steel mill, they started bringing in ‘43 prisoners from Germany and from Italy. I know Romanian language, I understood very well Italian. I know German perfectly. So they start using me to translate from the prisoners. From the prisoners of war. [unclear] The worst prisoners were the Japanese prisoners. They chose always death instead of working for the Russians. They were very...they used to kill themselves, they were put in wagons to go to work, they used to throw themselves out of the trains. It was an honorable death. you know the honorable death? And every Japanese had silk on his body, certain amount of five or six yards, meters, I don’t know, of silk...Because when you bury a Japanese, he’s buried in this silk. So, start coming on the market in Russia, Japanese silk. All of a sudden, we had Japanese silk, how much you want. Because, if the Japanese died, the Russians buried them without their silk. The silk came on the market. And, I remember, I had a dress from three yards, I bought in the market, three yards of black silk with a little flower and I made myself a dress. There was...every day, every day a person for what survived the war could write a book. Because in the morning it’s not the same like in the middle of the day, and the night not the same as in the morning, and the next day not the same like the day before.

Tape three, side two:

JF: This is tape three, side two of an interview with Mrs. Chayale Ash-Fuhrman on September 21, 1981.

CA: Yes, and this is the way our life was, approximate to the beginning of '45 when we start we had more news what's going on with the Russians are coming closer to Germany. And the life start to be a little easier even in Russia. Only first, maybe we got used, maybe we learned what to do to survive. Second one, we got all the time news what was going on there in Germany and we were thinking, "We are poor, we are hungry, but at least we survived. Who knows what is better." All kinds of things in the head. And everybody start living with the idea: maybe the war will soon be finished. You come back and you will find somebody from your families, from your relatives. And this way of thinking makes your life a little bit easier too. So, in '45 when we heard that the war finished and the Russians are in the lead...

JF: At this time, you were still in the same town?

CA: Same town.

JF: And your mother at this point was with you?

CA: Mother was with me.

JF: And had you found out about your father by now?

CA: I found out in...he died in '42, end of '42. In '43, ten days after he had died, somebody came from I told you before, Margeland, they came to me and said...and I said, "How's my daddy doing?" And they say, "What do you mean? You don't know that he is dead?" Not to announce! They knew where the family is. Not to say, not to announce, not to let..., nothing. Nothing. He disappeared one night, then I had to...I went there and I found out that there were 50 people in one grave, in one hole, with this antiseptic on the top, covered up without even a stone, with nothing. This is the way my father is there, is somewhere. This is a lot, a lot later. And, really, when the war finished, we start thinking, "How we are going out?" They could keep us here forever. Because we had no connection with the government. For this kind of asking, "When do they let me go?" "What do you mean go? You stay here until." You cannot ask even such questions of the government: "You want to go back." But all of a sudden, we found out that it's an exchange of citizens going on. From the other towns we found out. And it was the head of Polish government. Polish people don't let other nations to go over that. How you say? to boss over them. Because, when all the Polish people arrived in Russia, and the Russians want to give them passports, they didn't want to accept them, if you heard about it. They took only permanent, six-monthly, and to renew every six months, because they didn't accept the Russian citizenship.

JF: This is what your husband...?

CA: Yes, they didn't accept citizenship. A lot of them went to Siberia, a lot were sent away in the forests, or other things, but when the war started[8] they were let out from the prisons, because...the Polish people got passports, Russian passports in 1939, they start giving them, when Germany occupied half and the Russians got half.[9] So, a lot of Polish people were sent to prisons, to labor camps, and then they were freed. As soon as the war started, [the invasion of Russia], the Polish people were freed. They start working, that's the way my husband was. And...so they heard...the Polish people start talking to the Russians of exchanging. It didn't came from the Polish people who are in Russia: it came from the Polish people from Poland.[10] For an exchange. So, we went and registered. But you had to wait and they will give to your disposition a train. So, we were waiting for months. It was already '45, October or November, that they said that Begovat got a train to load the refugees. So we were again in this kind of wagons, in this train...You call it wagon? How you call it?

JF: The train car.

CA: The train car. In a train car, what they are usually using for cattle. In the middle a little oven, iron oven, and all the people inside, and we were traveling one month to the Polish border. They put us away for weeks on the dead line. People didn't have what to eat, they start again, running in town, buying something. And do you know what many murders was? Jewish people went down in the little villages, Ukrainian villages on the road, to buy food and they didn't came back. They killed them there. We found out later on. The same thing happened on the Polish territory. When we went over the border, we had a paper, half Polish, half Russian, and when we came to the border, they came on the train, they cut apart the two pieces. We got the Polish part, they took away the Russian part, and we went over the border on the Polish side. And the train brought us in small villages. And, again, the same thing. On the way, some people, I know a musician, a trumpetist, a fantastic trumpetist, went down into town to buy something and he was killed. It's fact, he left his wife and children in the train. They had to continue their journey without father.

JF: Not knowing what had happened?

CA: Some people told us. They were the Polish partisans, who, after the war still were going around in the forest and the fields and this and killing Jews. And these were people that were called *AKA*[11]. I don't even know what it means, shortening of words. But I remember they were called *AKA*ists.

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[8]The reference here is to the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, followed by an amnesty in August 1941, under which Soviet-Polish relations were resumed and Polish prisoners were released.

[9]These passports were given to Polish Jews who chose to accept them in the *eastern* half of Poland that the U.S.S.R. occupied.

[10]This refers to the so-called Lublin Government that was established in Poland by Polish Communists under Soviet initiative and support.

[11]Possibly a reference to the Armia Krajoeva, the Home Army of the Polish Government, representing the Polish Government-in-Exile in London.

JF: What initials?

CA: *AKA*, I would say. Maybe they wrote it differently. *AKA* was this people who...[short conversation with a person leaving the room. She comments to JF]. They called him for an interview in Bank Leumi. Because he worked in bank in Israel. And here is...[unclear]. When we came to the Polish territory we found out that a lot of pogroms, a lot of things are going on against Jews. Because if a Jew came to a little town, asking, making a little searching for his family, for his house, he grew up in. If he were good, some people, it happened, they got scared. "Look, he survived! What happened?" And they didn't do nothing. Some were afraid that he will take away...there were already Polish people living in his house, or having their factory or having their business, so, they often, they were killed. They never could go. And everyone felt, on the territory of Poland, that they could never stay there. It's like only a transit. They would like to find out what happened and go away. Nobody, at least, the old ones in the train with us, had at least in their mind to come back home and continue their life in Poland. Nobody. Some of them who were communistically inclined, and other things, or they got a big job, or their wives were not Jewish, and maybe they survived in Russia or in the war because they were saved from non-Jewish girls...They found their families and they didn't want to continue further, so they stayed in Poland. A lot of them stayed in Poland. And then, they left later on through the years, a lot of them are in America, a lot of them Australia, and other places. But, it was very hard, I remember, my ex-husband used to say, "Every Jew feels like the earth is burning under their feet." They couldn't...it wasn't possible. To go around, you could move over in another town. Most of the people moved over to the territory what Germany gave to Poland. It's called Silesia. And all Poland took over Silesia. It's a part of Germany. So, I lived in [unclear].

JF: So, this is the area where you...?

CA: Yes, in Silesia. I lived in Silesia. Nobody wants to say Poland. Nobody stayed in Warsaw, Lodz. And this everybody moved over to Silesia. Like a bridge from there to go away. And everyone who left with the *Bricha*, on their way to Israel, comes from Silesia. Because from there it was very close, Innsbruck, from Innsbruck to Italy to Israel. This was the route that everybody dreamt about it. I became a secretary of Poale Zion T. S. [?]. The Zionist movement had a big committee. Helping out with documents, and papers, and all kinds of things to leave the country. Usually, you know what it came? Passports from Israeli citizens that were brought over to Poland. We used to change the pictures, and another group went to Israel.

JF: Now, in the area where you were living...?

CA: Yes.

JF: The Poles were not in control, or the Polish people had a different attitude?

CA: Poland was in control, but together with the Russians yet still.

JF: So that the antisemitism was not as...?

CA: No, it was a very bad antisemitism. They were afraid. You can see that a Pollack would look on a Jew like, "My god, he survived." You know, it was a scary thing for him. You understand? In the same time, it was in a town in Poland, Kielce. It's called Kielce, it was a big pogrom. All complex of Jews who lived together, who came back from Russia who survived, from the Partisans, from Russia, or they were in the Aryan part, with Polish documents, as a Jew who survived, they were killed. As a pogrom, officially pogrom, it's called the Kielce pogrom. This was already in the beginning of 1946.

JF: What was different about this area in Silesia that attracted these people?

CA: It was a mixture of Polish and more Germans. And German people felt very down, very down. They were suffering from hunger, they didn't have so good like that before. They had to stay in line to have something. You talked to them with...You know it was, really, you couldn't be...and everyone was saying, "Not me, not my family, we didn't do it." They felt very humble. The German people felt, they're very humble. I don't know about the young people, maybe still they have some activities going on, but I mean the people who lived between us, in the markets and the buildings and this were the German people were very humble and talked beautifully with us. This was the thing.

JF: So the antisemitism that you were experiencing there was from the Polish people, not from the Germans.

CA: Not from the Germans. The Germans were afraid of the Polish people, they were afraid of us...there was all...a mixture together that you felt like an underdog. I remember in the market coming, asking for something, like underdog. This is what you say, underdog? This is the way they were talking, very...this was the population of the places that we were. And, in the same time, in Wroclaw [Breslau] not far from there, they established the Yiddish State Theatre in Poland, beginning with a new state theatre. Ida Kaminska came there, and this is like a new life, starting a new life.

JF: This town was again...?

CA: B-W-A-L-B-R-Z-Y-C-H.

JF: Where you were?

CA: Where I was. It was the capital of Niederschlesien lower part of Silesia. It's called in German Niederschlesien [Lower Silesia].

JF: What is the spelling?

CA: Bwalbrzych? B-W-A-L-B-R-Z-Y-C-H, this is the real spelling.

JF: And the town where they established the new Yiddish State Theatre?

CA: Wroclaw. It was before...what was the name before?

JF: And that, the original name that you just said, is spelled?

CA: Wroclaw. W-R-O-C-L-A-W. This is Wroclaw in Polish language written. Because this is a "t." [ts]

JF: From the time that you were in Russia, when you were involved in those small plays, the revues that you described, did you have any other contact with any kind of Yiddish theatre during those years?

CA: Yes. I used to come to Tashkent and our turn...is a story session for itself. Sitting on the steps from the train I went several times to Tashkent. You know, outside. Sometimes I was beaten up with a, how you call it, a broom, a small broom. You know the conductor, has the broom. And I was sitting outside on the steps holding my head like this [unclear] to Tashkent and the conductor found out that somebody is sitting there and she started through the window, hitting me on my head with this broom, but I was holding up until I came to Tashkent to meet actors, to see what's going on, to find out what it is. And, when I came there, I found out that some actors are performing on a semi-professional basis, what I told you before, and some died, some are still alive, some left the place and went to another place, maybe they'll find...make it easier for them, better for them. But I always tried to come to the bigger town to find out something. But, usually you don't find nothing. Radio? You hear only if they took over a town, it was screaming in the radio, that Russians took over a town from Germany, or from this and this name, or the Russians took over this and this and this. Then marches, military marches or whatever. Very seldom some news, what you can know what is going on.

JF: Did you find out in Tashkent what was happening with Yiddish publications or the Yiddish writers or any of the Yiddish language issues?...[unclear]

CA: I know that they were...how you call it? continuing, writing some...how would you call it? Not written by hand, by machine hand making certain publications for the Jewish, not Jewish population, I wouldn't say, but for the cultural people. Some things but, it wasn't in a big, how you say? How would I call it? Format. I know it was a lot of many writers were in Tashkent...

JF: And you said the Moscow theatre group had come...

CA: Some of them, yes. Some of them were in Asia. Because, it was...Tashkent, and it was in the German it was Kirghiztan, and it was Kazakhstan, a lot of states all around and people were spread out, sometimes not in their own world because they were sent. Because you can stay here, you cannot stay wherever you want, you have to stay...Even, you cannot travel wherever you want in Russia. You have to have a special...that you are free from work and a special, how you say? that you are allowed to travel.

JF: Permit.

CA: Permit. I know the words, but when I need them, I don't have them. It is hard for me.

JF: So, to get back to Silesia. You were working in the position helping to get people to Israel.

CA: To Israel, because, knowing several languages, they took me in as a secretary because I was speaking with a lot of refugees what came...some even not from

Poland. They made...they registered as Pollacks with false papers, change their names only to go out from Russia. A lot of people married *fictiv* to take out somebody from Russia. It was going on, after we heard that you go out only to Poland. I know of girls who married with guys, they separated right away after that, but with his papers. If you had a little paper, something to show that you were from Poland, you are from Poland, then you could go. It could be that you paid your rent, can be from library, something, if you had, you could go. So, happens that one had two-three papers, so he would sell one paper for another family, and it was business for that. Selling a little paper only to leave Russia. To come out to Poland. And from Bwalbrzych...because we organized groups to go away...and when I lived there, I lived in a kibbutz. The kibbutz wasn't an alte kibbutz. In center city a big building the people were living there on the kibbutz way of life. I was kibbutz *Dror*, kibbutz *Ha-Oved*, ...they organized kibbutzim there. And we were working for the people to go. And in 1947, I...how do you say in English? I was pregnant. And I said to my husband, "Or we leave now, or I stay here until the pregnancy is finished and I have my baby." Because I couldn't have a baby for four years after I married. I couldn't have any and I was...and the doctor said because I worked hard, I carried with my hands, 60, 70 kilograms. My uterus was moved away four fingers. This is the way the doctor showed me. Four fingers on the side, and I couldn't give...this he said is from hard labor. And I knew, because I worked in the fields and I carried cases with 60, 70 kilograms heaviness, so I was treating [?] myself. I said the only thing to make good, feel us peace [?], after my family died is to have a child. And when I become pregnant, I said to my husband, "Or now, or who knows, never," because I am afraid of my baby. And we left in the middle of the night with another group, like we used to arrange, in the middle of the night only a rucksack, bedsack you call it, five pair of panties and two slips and fifth blouses...whatever we could to pass the border from Poland to Czechoslovakia. And when we arrived in Czechoslovakia was waiting certain people for us. I walked through Czechoslovakia until Bratislava. Walked. You know? And from Bratislava we had to go through Vienna. You know, to Vienna. Vienna was separated in four zones. And we want the American zone. So, we had to pass the Russian zone. So people who had children put tape on their mouths, and at night we were going like this on hills, because down the hills there were the patrols of Soviet soldiers. And if they are catching you they are sending you back to Russia. So we had to go this little...we arrived and I had my mother. Only she wasn't so young anymore, and I remember she was...I was afraid I would lose her. And when we came on the other side of the hill, we had reflectors, light waiting for us. The *Bricha*, the Israeli guys were waiting for us. And they put us in a camp in...from Vienna to Linz. In Linz, on the American Zone...this was a concentration camp in the German time, and a refugee camp after the war. There you were considered a D.P., displaced person, with cards from the American Zone that we are displaced persons. There I gave birth to my daughter. And when she was three months old...

JF: This was nineteen forty...?

CA: Eight.

JF: Eight.

CA: In April, right in the beginning. They found out that my daughter has a hole in her heart, and until today...this is the first time I say it in the tape, I never talked to her [perhaps she means she's never talked to her daughter *about this*]...maybe the reason that we walked 25 miles I don't remember 45 miles to Czechoslovakia... I walked. Secondly, the scare I had in my heart going on this mountain wall through Vienna, that she was born with a defect. She doesn't know that. I say, something I went through in the time I was pregnant. Something terrible went through. We were afraid they would send us back, you know, and this was something terrible. Everybody was really scared to death. Only to see us over this mountain. And when we came to other side, this was fantastic. We still lived in a barrack, it was not luxury, but we get food from the UNRRA and the Joint sended clothing and something to eat, and then '48, May, the independence of Israel was declared. And in August, '48, I took a bedsack with a pillow inside, nothing, no clothing, nothing, a pillow with my little baby in my hands, and I went through the mountains, through Innsbruck, walking again through Italy...Italy...on every station were waiting Jewish people with fruits, with bread, waiting for these trains with refugees. Then from there we took a boat. An Italian boat, *Campidoglio*...I'll remember it till my death. I had papers with my husband with the name Rabinowitch and the baby in my pillow was a little boy. But it was a girl, but on my false documents I had a little boy. Who would open up and see four month baby if it's...and they told us if the British are stopping in the middle on the Mediterranean, don't speak any Yiddish. They know that this ship has Greek Jews who survived. You can talk only with your hands. And we arrived at night to Jaffa. They took us by little boats to the shore and they put us again in a camp. Tent camp. I was in this tent camp for four months.

JF: In Jaffa?

CA: No, in Ranaana. Jaffa was they port. But in the same night when we arrived, they took away my husband to the war, in the army. This is...I mean the beginning of a better time. It was very bad then in 1948, we still had the ration cards for food. We were in a tent with the jackals around, hyenas around. We had the laughing hyenas around this place. But I was all the time with my little one in my hands, because the doctor said, "If she will live a year, you have to say 'thank you' to God." And she is now a mother of two sons. She went through surgery at the University of Pennsylvania.

JF: And the hole was repaired?

CA: Dacron patch. They put on her hole on her heart. And she is a Hebrew teacher now, she's a fantastic woman, lady, daughter. I can say she is really a down-to-earth person, and my other kids the same thing. They are fantastic good kids.

JF: Now, you lived in Israel, then, for how long?

CA: Almost 15 years. My son is born in Israel. The only one that was not born in Israel is my daughter, the one. My son was born in Haifa. And, we went through-- we

couldn't-- we left Ranaana, and they send us to Akko. It was a town occupied by-- it was empty, the Arabs run away, because if somebody says that the Israelis pushed out the Arabs from the country, I am the first to say, maybe not the first, but I say that that is not true. I saw with my own eyes one Arab shooting a neighbor because he doesn't want to run away. They forced one for the, "Let us go away, we soon come back, and take over again." This was the mentality. They left all of the villages, towns, houses, they were free, they were empty. Nobody was there, so when a lot of Jewish refugees came in, they occupied these houses, and they lived in them. This was the occupation. Not because they occupied Israel. It's a different way because I know that. I came to a woman from Greece and we told her, "Look, the house will be taken away by the government because nobody is living in that. If you give us a room to stay, us being there nobody will touch you." Because, if a house stays empty, and people live on the streets and in tents, they have to occupy to put the people in, because right away they took the men away in war. They have to put their wives and kids somewhere. So this was the way of exchanging, of putting the refugees in houses. They were freed from people that run away from the country. That's the whole idea. They used to go with armored cars, brought bread to the people in the houses, because people were afraid to go out buying bread. There was Arabs in the streets, or Arab could shoot from the roof...you never knew. So, they were standing in the houses and the armored car would give the bread to the people. Then they gave me a little Arab house, not house, I wouldn't say house, like a shed with no windows. You know that Arab houses don't have windows, because they don't...

Tape four, side one:

JF: This is tape #4 side #1 of an interview with Mrs. Chayale Ash-Fuhrman.

CA: My husband made in this shed a little hole so we can breathe. And, at night, we couldn't have light because Israel was still at war. We couldn't make light in the houses, we couldn't walk at night, it was like curfew. We couldn't walk at night in the houses. People in the streets had certain bands to show the people where the shelters are and this was the beginning of our life in Israel, '48, the beginning of '49. Everything was on cards, on ration cards, even candles, to light a candle you have to...they have to be sure that you are religious to give you candles. And I remember in that time I was very rebelling, and say, "I'm not religious but I want to light the candles." I'm used to that and since I had my baby I always lighted candles on *Shabbos*, but some of these religious people were very...all because they didn't have enough and they give only what [unclear] and they rationed meat and everything was rationed. We had some eggs and a little butter because of our child, because she was breast fed more than a year, because of her sickness, but she had a card to get three eggs a week and a little butter, so, we, the grown-ups used it. So I can give better milk for the baby. And this was in '49, the end of '49. A group of actors came to me and said, "Chayale, it's time to organize the theatre," and I was the first one to organize a professional theatre in Haifa. It's called the Haifa Yiddishe Operetten Theatre. It was done in Haifa. They didn't want us to rent us places to perform, they were afraid it's in Jewish, it's in Yiddish, and because it was a fight what language to be the dominating language of the country, because they spoke—the refugees—all kind of languages, and the Jews from Yemen was Arabic, Jews from Morocco and Algiers spoke Arabic, and Jews with European cultures spoke Yiddish, so it start a whole mish-mash in Israel. And, in the time that they had to fight with the Arabs, they were thinking what language to introduce and what to do, and it was very hard for Yiddish actors to organize in the beginning. We performed on roofs...the roofs in Israel are flat...where you are hanging the laundry...very flat. They used to write the poster by hand, put them outside the gate of the house and at night the roof was packed with people. They were hungry for Yiddish songs and for Yiddish theatre. Or, you perform in a back yard, it was packed. You perform on a roof, it was packed. Everywhere you announced only, it was right away packed with people, the Jewish people. They were hungry. People from the forests, from the partisan, people from the labor camps, people from everywhere, they came to listen, to hear, and the mostly...Jewish songs from before. From the past. This is, was...they used to cry, and laugh. This was '49, '50, the beginning. And that was...I was the first to organize the Yiddisher Operetten Theatre in Haifa. And I was with this theatre the star of this group. I wouldn't call star...the main actress of this theatre for eight years, almost eight years. Then, Israel established themselves beautifully. They start bringing stars from all over, from America. And they hired me to be as first actress in their

ensemble, in their group, and I moved over to Tel Aviv, and in Tel Aviv I was till the last day of my coming here. With intervals...

JF: Now, had there been Yiddish theatre also in Tel Aviv during the time that you were in Haifa?

CA: No.

JF: Was there any other Yiddish theatre in Israel at all?

CA: No, they hired us to Tel Aviv to come in the High Holidays, between the High Holidays, this is a very good time for Yiddish theatre. [unclear] *Yomtov* is a very good night for theatre, when the holidays finishing. The evening. So, they hired the Haifa theatre to come to Tel Aviv to perform, not in auditorium, in a sport hall, Maccabee Hapoel was then. So, in this hall we used to come and perform, and this was in the '50s in the beginning, in '51, and they took us to Tel Aviv. And, little by little, because people from Tel Aviv organized and made another. They named their theatre Goldfaden Theatre. We called ourselves "Operetten Haifa Theatre." They called themselves "Yiddishe Goldfaden Theatre." Goldfaden was the founder of the Yiddish theatre. So, little by little, it starts, and by year gone by, you had twelve months a year, three, four professional theatres in a country of three million people, known Jewish people, all three million.

JF: So, you performed in Tel Aviv in '51?

CA: Oh, yes. In end of '49 I start performing.

JF: In Tel Aviv?

CA: In Haifa. Tel Aviv a lot later.

JF: In 1951, you said?

CA: No, no, no. I performed in '49, '50 and '51. In '51 they brought us to Tel Aviv for the first time to perform for their audiences, and it was a big success.

JF: That's what I mean.

CA: So all the other groups start organizing because it was actors in Tel Aviv, too. They start organizing.

JF: And then you, yourself, moved to Tel Aviv.

CA: I moved to Tel Aviv.

JF: In '57, about?

CA: Yes. '56 or '57, something like this, and start performing there. Even in Tel Aviv, I was for a time a big, like a main actress. In '58, I was called by London and I performed four months in the London Grand Palais Theatre. They called me there "the leading lady of Tel Aviv," not Israeli actress but "the leading lady of Tel Aviv." I still have posters somewhere. I had it. And then, in 1960, I was called to perform for four months in South Africa. This was...we were called...But here in London, I was alone, a star. Someone in London knew me as a child from Romania, as an actress, that my parents were actors, but in South Africa an all Israeli ensemble came, too...We played Johannesburg, Capetown, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Durban. I was four months there. From South Africa I came to the United States.

JF: Why did you come to the United States?

CA: This comes interesting. I divorced my husband in 1953 and I was alone with my daughter and mother. My son was with my husband and my daughter was with me. She was a sick girl and I decided to keep her with me. And I performed in Israel. In 1959, Ari Fuhrman, my husband now, came from Bucharest, from the Romanian State Theatre, and performed together with me in Israel. We met, knew each other very well. I loved him right away, but we didn't marry. I know him, a good friend, I was with a sick mother and a child and he was with a little boy from his first marriage. His parents were here in America from the D.P. camps. They came here. He didn't see them for 15 years. So, he decided to go to the States to see the parents. He came to the United States and I went to Africa, and we were corresponding and he brought them...I don't know, to go back to Israel or not to go back to Israel, or to stay in the United States, and I wrote him, "I'll come to the United States," not knowing that I will marry him. I would like to see you. I have a paid ticket, I can use it via New York. So, I went. I came to America, I met Ari, he introduced me to his family, to everybody and I had in mind, I had a ticket paid to go back to Israel and Ari asked me if I would like to marry him, in a very funny way, like only actors maybe will do. "What are you doing Sunday?" I says, "Nothing." "So, can you make time so that we can go and to marry?" We married. I brought over later my daughter for the reason for the surgery, knowing that medicine is in America. We would return to Israel, we had in mind. But I brought my daughter here. She went through surgery, she found a wonderful guy and married here, so we decided to stay here. And my son was still there. I used to go every year, twice a year, to Israel. That was my life. I said, "I am earning money with the theatre to go and see my children every time in Israel." And, really, one thing I know, that now, I feel very happy, with everything I went through, I feel very happy. Happy for one reason, that we survived, in spite of everything that happened. This is the first thing. Second one, that we have children, despite that children were killed, we can continue with our families, we can continue with our lives, and I'm involved in everything that has to do with Yiddish culture, with Yiddish life, and I will never let my kids forget what I went through because my children's essays in high school was the Holocaust. My son and my daughter, the same thing. They wrote about the Holocaust. They made interview with people with numbers and I gave them the material and they wrote about the Holocaust in essays in high school. Because this is the only way to make our future generations not to forget. It's hard, sometimes to talk about things to children, sometimes you don't even want them to know even about that. But this is the biggest mistake a lot of parents made, to hide the real truth. They had to find it out later on, when they are college students or whatever it is, what went on. It would better be to find out first hand from their own parents, but usually, "Don't bother me, I don't want to know. Do I have to eat because other people are starving?" The same way, "Do I have to cry now because there was a Holocaust?" It was hard, but thank God, now it was the gathering in Israel. A lot of young people went there. They gave over to the young

people the legacy not to forget..., they don't have to go through to know about it. So, this is a very healthy way to do it. With our children...I don't know about our grandchildren, maybe because it's so far away... But, our children, I'm sure that they know, they suffer, and they want to know more, I think, about it, because in the moment that...Some woman came out in new York, wrote a book with all the children of survivors...are psychologically not healthy, mental health. Some woman, I don't know who, where she took that idea. They organize themselves. We have now branches of a survivors' second generation. They went to New York, they had a conference, they had conferences here. They will never know; let...to say such a thing, because mostly are professionals, intellectuals...because we parents we try to give them the best we can. Only the reason, because we couldn't. If I have...Mostly families are the second and third families. People lost their first families, wives and children, in the war, in the gas chambers. When they survived, they have new families, starting right after the war. From the beginning they have to give the children the best they can. And this is the way they are. Lawyers and doctors and professional people, generally, and how she came with such a...how you call it? standpoint, name, for the children of survivors aren't normally balanced...A book about that! This gave them the push to organize, to talk about it, to be...because young people sometimes need a push like that. It's better this than, God forbid, some bad things are happening to remind them that they are Jews.

JF: Thank you very much, Mrs. Fuhrman.

CA: You are welcome, dear.