

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM  
FEDERAL RESERVE WORLD WAR II ECONOMIES  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**MEMOIRIST:** ALFRED SCHNEIDER  
**INTERVIEWERS:** ADINA LANGER  
MIKE BRYAN  
SANDRA GHIZONI  
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**LOCATION:** ATLANTA, GEORGIA

**INTERVIEW BEGINS**

<Begin Disc 1>

**Adina:** My name is Adina Langer. I am the curator of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. Today is September 17, 2015. I am here at the Federal Reserve in Atlanta [Georgia] with Alfred Schneider. Do you prefer Fred or Alfred?

**Alfred:** Alfred.

**Adina:** Alfred. Okay, we will go with that. Could you please introduce yourself and say when and where you were born?

**Alfred:** Right. My name is Alfred Schneider. I'm a Professor Emeritus from Georgia Tech<sup>1</sup> and MIT.<sup>2</sup> We have lived in Atlanta for forty years except for five years when I was up in Cambridge [Massachusetts]. I spent the first eighteen years of my life in a very small province in East-Central Europe called Bukovina.<sup>3</sup>

**Adina:** Can you spell that?

**Alfred:** With your permission, I'd like to say just a few words to place you into it because it's a very unique history.

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<sup>1</sup> The Georgia Institute of Technology (commonly referred to as 'Georgia Tech' or 'Tech') is a public research university in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States. It is a part of the University System of Georgia. The educational institution was founded in 1885 as the Georgia School of Technology as part of Reconstruction plans to build an industrial economy in the post-Civil War Southern United States.

<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is a private research university in Cambridge, Massachusetts that was founded in 1861. MIT's current 168-acre campus opened in 1916. MIT is most widely known for its research and education in the physical sciences and engineering.

<sup>3</sup> Bukovina is a historical region, variously described as in Central or Eastern Europe. The region is located on the northern slopes of the central Eastern Carpathians and the adjoining plains, today divided between Romania and Ukraine. Bukovina was part of Ottoman Moldavia until the eighteenth century. From 1775 to 1918, it was the easternmost crown land of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bukovina was annexed by Romania after World War I. The population was almost solidly Ukrainian in the north and Romanian in the south, while in the towns there were also a number of Germans, Poles, and Jews.

**Adina:** Sure. We would love to hear more about the history of the region. Periodically, when you introduce a new place or a new family name, we might ask you to spell it just so that we are sure we are talking about the correct place or group of people.

**Alfred:** There are many ways of spelling Bukovina because of its unusual history. The most frequent way is B, as in boy-U-K-O-V-I-N-A. It means the land of the beaches.

**Adina:** Okay. And the city in which you were born?

**Alfred:** The capital city of Bukovina is, again the original German name was Czernowitz, and it all kinds of other names later.<sup>4</sup> Let me . . .

**Adina:** Sorry. Just to interrupt you one more time, and the year you were born?

**Alfred:** 1926.

**Adina:** Thank you.

**Alfred:** Okay. Bukovina is a very small province. I looked it up this morning and it is about one-fifteenth the area of [the United States state of] Georgia. Yet, it has a northern Bukovina and a southern Bukovina, which is now split by an international border. Bukovina was for centuries a part of the principality of Moldavia,<sup>5</sup> which in turn was under the Ottoman Empire for centuries.<sup>6</sup>

Then in 1775, it was occupied by the Austrian Empire and eventually became a crown land, which means they had their own representative in the parliament in Vienna [Austria].<sup>7</sup> There was quite a break for this city. When the Austrians took it over it was a rather backwards

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<sup>4</sup> Chernivitsi [German: Czernowitz; Romanian: Cernăuți] is a city in the southwest Ukraine in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, in the historical region of Bukovina. It is along the Prut River, near the present-day Romanian border.

<sup>5</sup> Moldavia is a historical region and former principality in Central and Eastern Europe, corresponding to the territory between the Eastern Carpathians and the Dniester River. An initially independent and later autonomous state, it existed as a vassal of the Ottoman Empire from 1538 until the eighteenth century, when it passed to the Austrian Empire as a result of the Kutsug-Kainargi peace treaty. In 1859, it united with the historical and geographical region of Wallachia as the basis of the modern Romanian state. At various times, Moldavia included the regions of Bessarabia, all of Bukovina and Hertza.

<sup>6</sup> The Ottoman Empire was a state and caliphate created by Turkish tribes that controlled much of Southeastern Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa between the 14th and early 20th centuries. At its height, the empire encompassed most of southeastern Europe to the gates of Vienna, including present-day Hungary and parts of Ukraine. The empire came to an end in 1922, when the Turkish Republic and various successor states in southeastern Europe and the Middle East replaced it.

<sup>7</sup> Austria-Hungary, also known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was a constitutional union of the Empire of Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary that existed from 1867 to 1918, when it collapsed as a result of defeat in World War I. Austria was the German-speaking heartland of the Holy Roman Empire (until 1806), the Austrian Empire (until 1867), and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (until 1918). After Austria was defeated in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 was adopted, joining together the Kingdom of Hungary and the Empire of Austria to form Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary was one of the Central Powers in World War I.

region, not populated very well.<sup>8</sup> The populations that lived there were Romanians, or Moldavians, and Ruthenians,<sup>9</sup> or Ukrainians, and a small number of the population called the Hutsuls,<sup>10</sup> which were the hillbillies there. Because this region lies between the Carpathian [Mountains]<sup>11</sup> and the Dniester River,<sup>12</sup> the Austrians—realizing the unusual geographic location of this place—started a rather intensive period of population growth. They brought in people from as far away as Swabia,<sup>13</sup> and Baden, Germany, and from the Austrian Empire. Poles migrated there and eventually a sizeable Jewish population.

**Adina:** Do you know around when this large group of Jews arrived there?

**Alfred:** There were just a few thousand Jews when it became part of Austria. It was a small flavor of Turkish Jews because this had been part of the Turkish [or] Ottoman Empire. Eventually, by the time of its apex, the Jewish population was around 150,000 there.

Now, the province, due to a set of favorable circumstances, like being quasi-autonomous and also realizing that they are a multi-ethnic province,<sup>14</sup> no single ethnic group was in the majority so they learned how to get along with each other. It was a remarkable place. They also learned to have a common language, which was German. That explains the unusual setting. You had a German language and German culture background way . . . hundreds of miles from the nearest German speaking county, like Austria or parts of Czechoslovakia.

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<sup>8</sup> Bukovina was sparsely settled when it came under Austrian rule. In 1775, it had 75,000 inhabitants. Eventually, natural growth and immigration increased the population to 208,000 in 1807; 447,000 in 1857; and 642,000 in 1890. At the end of the nineteenth century, the population growth slowed slightly as many emigrated to America, but by 1900, the population was 730,000. In 1930, it was 853,000.

<sup>9</sup> Ruthenian is a term formerly used in Western Europe for the ancestors of modern East Slavic peoples from territories in modern-day Hungary, Poland and Ukraine. After the partition of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, ‘Ruthenian’ came to be associated primarily with Ukrainians living under the Hapsburg monarchy in the regions of Galicia, Bukovina and Transcarpathia.

<sup>10</sup> Hutsuls (Ukrainian: *hutsuly*; Romanian: *huțul*) are an ethnographic group of Ukrainian pastoral highlanders inhabiting the Hutsul region in the southeastern most part of the Carpathian Mountains. Today the region spans parts of western Ukraine and Romania.

<sup>11</sup> The Carpathian Mountains or Carpathians are a range of mountains forming an arc across Central Europe. The roughly 1,500 kilometers (932 miles) long arc stretches through the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania, and Serbia. The region is dense with forested hills and fast-flowing rivers.

<sup>12</sup> The Dniester River [Ukrainian: Dnister; Russian: Dnestr; Romanian: Nistrul] begins on the north side of the Carpathian Mountains in southwestern Ukraine. It flows south and east for 840 miles through Ukraine and then through Moldova, finally discharging into the Black Sea on Ukrainian territory again. It is the second longest river in Ukraine and the main water artery of Moldova.

<sup>13</sup> Swabia is a cultural, historic and linguistic region, which is now mostly divided between the modern states of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, in southwestern Germany.

<sup>14</sup> By 1930, nearly 30 percent of the population was Jewish. The remaining population was composed of Romanians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles. In December 1939, there were 49,587 Jews in the city.

The development was remarkable because it was sort of the Atlanta of that part. It was a railroad hub [that] built it. It was a center for trains from Northern to Southern Europe and from Eastern Europe to Western Europe. Also, the people from that province developed an unusual characteristic. That is [that] their ability was languages. I don't want to brag, but when I had to take my PhD exam in New York, it was a language exam. The choices were French, German or Russian. I told the [professor], "You pick the language."

**Adina:** You spoke all three. Did you grow up speaking these languages or were they taught in school?

**Alfred:** Yes. Probably in your question period, you'll find out. I'll just skim about.

Eventually Bukovina, and especially Czernowitz, excelled in its school system, including a university, the Franz-Josephs University, which was the eastern most German University.<sup>15</sup> The level of education—which probably will come out during your questions—was quite high.

Again, in order not to follow Mr. Trump, I'm trying not to brag, but I will just mention two people who came from that area.<sup>16</sup> The greatest German language lyrical poet after World War II, Paul Celan, came from that area.<sup>17</sup> [Another individual from the area]—the son of a friend of my grandfather and I knew his brother very well—was Eric Roll, Baron Roll of Ipsden, who was the director of the Bank of England and member of the British Cabinet.<sup>18</sup> He just died at the age of 96 in England the other day. [He was] an outstanding economist. So far from bragging . . .

Now, very quickly, what were the political changes that are going to lead us into what we are going to discuss here? The Austrian rule lasted from 1775 till 1917 or 1918, which was the

<sup>15</sup> Founded in 1872, the Franz-Josephs-Universität, was the second modern university in the Hungarian realm of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, located in Czernowitz (Chernivitsi), the capital of Bukovina. Today it is known as the University of Chernivtsi, one of the leading Ukrainian institutions for higher education.

<sup>16</sup> Donald John Trump (1946- ) is the 45th president of the United States. Before entering politics, he was a businessman and television personality. At the time of this interview, Trump was a Republican Party candidate for President.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Celan (1920-1970) was born Paul Antschel in Czernowitz, Romania, to a German-speaking Jewish family. His surname was later spelled Ancel, and he eventually adopted the anagram Celan as his pen name. In 1938, Celan went to Paris to study medicine, but returned to Romania before the outbreak of World War II. During the war, Celan worked in a forced labor camp for 18 months; his parents were deported to a Nazi concentration camp, where they later died. After escaping the labor camp, Celan lived in Bucharest and Vienna before settling in Paris. In Paris, he taught German language and literature and worked as a translator. His first collection of poems was published in 1948. He became one of the major German-language poets of the post-World War II era.

<sup>18</sup> Sir Eric Roll, Baron Roll of Ipsden, (1907-2005) was a British academic economist, public servant and banker. Born in Nowosielitza, Austria, Roll and grew up near Czernowitz in Bukovina, which became part of Romania. During World War I, his family fled to Vienna. His parents sent him to study in England in the 1920s and he completed his PhD at Birmingham University. He was made a life peer as Baron Roll of Ipsden, of Ipsden in the County of Oxfordshire, in 1977.

end of World War I. With the collapse of the Austrian Empire, there was sort of musical chairs between the neighboring countries. The Ukrainians were trying to take the place over.<sup>19</sup> The Romanian were trying to take the place over. The Jews were marching around with blue and white flags. Eventually, the Allies gave Bukovina to the Kingdom of Romania<sup>20</sup> at the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>21</sup>

Overnight, the people who had been very loyal Austrian citizens became Romanian citizens. They didn't speak the language and felt it was a cultural demotion. For instance, it's also going to come out my father was a MD [medical doctor]. He had graduated from the University of Vienna. Here he had his practice now and his Romanian language was nonexistent. Yet, he was able to eventually play an important role in building up a system for the government railroads there.

Now, in 1940, as part of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreements there, when they sort of divided Eastern and Central Europe, that part was designated as the sphere of influence for the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1940, Romania received an ultimatum from the Soviet

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<sup>19</sup> During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Czernowitz became a center of both Romanian and Ukrainian nationalist movements.

<sup>20</sup> Modern Romania was formed in 1859 when the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia united. The new state was officially named Romania in 1866 and gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1877. The Kingdom of Romania was a constitutional monarchy that existed from 1881 with the crowning of prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen as King Carol I. After World War I, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Transylvania, as well as parts of Banat, Crisana, and Maramures became part of the sovereign Kingdom of Romania. The Kingdom of Romania lasted until 1947 when King Michael I abdicated and the Romanian became a people's republic.

<sup>21</sup> On November 11, 1918, fighting in World War I came to an end following the signing of an armistice between Germany and the Allies that called for a ceasefire. The war formally ended with the signing of the Versailles Treaty (or treaty of Versailles) on June 28, 1919.

<sup>22</sup> The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (also known as the Hitler-Stalin Pact and German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact) was a non-aggression pact between Germany and Russia signed August 23, 1939. The pact provided that the two countries would not attack each other, independently or in conjunction with other powers; would not support any third power that might attack the other party to the pact; would remain in consultation with each other with regard to their common interests; would not join any power or group of powers that threatened the other; and would solve all differences between them through negotiation or arbitration. The public pact was accompanied by a secret protocol, reached on the same day, which divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence. Hitler, knowing that he wasn't going to have to fight Russia if he invaded Poland, invaded Poland just one week later. The Pact ended on June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

Union. Twenty-four hours later, the Red Army marched into Czernowitz.<sup>23</sup> For the next year, we were part of the Soviet Union. I attended a Soviet school [and spoke in] Russian. That's the first language [I learned]. I should say, in Romania, French was a second language, so I had seven years of French. That's the second language [I learned].

A year later, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup> We were very close to the border there and now we were in the midst of the war. We were bombed—not too much, fortunately. About two weeks later, the victorious German and Romanian Armies . . . Romania became their allies,<sup>25</sup> which was running counter to their historical tradition because they were the creation of the Western Powers—England, and France, and Italy. But there was a very shrewd [perspective on] letting the Soviet Union take two of their provinces, Bukovina and Bessarabia.<sup>26</sup> The Romanians saw an opportunity to get these provinces back. They became allies of Germany.

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<sup>23</sup> The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact left Romania isolated between two great powers, Germany and the USSR, both of which were hostile to Romania. Although Romania soon proclaimed its neutrality in the fall of 1939, Romanian-Soviet relations became more strained in the spring of 1940. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union continued to pressure Germany to yield Bessarabia and Bukovina as part of the negotiations that had already divided much of Eastern Europe. By June, massive Soviet forces were placed on Romania's northern and eastern borders. On June 26, 1940, an ultimatum was handed to Romanian diplomats in Moscow. It demanded the "return" of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union as well as the "transfer" of northern Bukovina to Soviet sovereignty. Germany advised the Romanians to yield to Soviet demands, Italy did the same, and the governments in Belgrade and Athens insisted that Bucharest should not disturb regional peace through military resistance. Militarily and politically isolated, Romania decided to cede to the Soviet ultimatum, hoping to maintain the rest of Romanian territory.

<sup>24</sup> Under the codename Operation "Barbarossa," Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, in the largest German military operation of World War II. Although the Soviet Union had been Germany's ally in the war against Poland, the destruction of the Soviet Union and conquest of territory in the East had long been one of Hitler's proclaimed goals. The attack on the Soviet Union marked a turning point in both the history of World War II and the Holocaust.

<sup>25</sup> Until 1938, Romania was a constitutional monarchy under King Carol II, who had assumed the throne in 1930. The 1930's were marked by social unrest, high unemployment, and strikes. Nationalist parties and the fascist Iron Guard grew in popularity and political rivalries soon put the country on the verge of civil war. At the outbreak of World War II, a royal dictatorship was in place and Romania adopted a position of neutrality. After Romania lost about 30 percent of its territory (mostly gained after World War I) to the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Bulgaria in 1940, the increasingly unpopular King Carol II was forced to abdicate. Although his son Michael I assumed the throne, a coalition government under General Ion Antonescu and the Iron Guard came to power. On November 20, 1940, Romania formally joined the Axis powers.

<sup>26</sup> Bessarabia is a historical region in Eastern Europe, bounded by the Dniester River on the east and the Prut River on the west, mostly in modern-day Moldova and part of Ukraine. The area had been under Russian rule during the nineteenth century. In 1917, in the wake of the Russian Revolution, it became part of the Kingdom of Romania.

That started massacres and all kinds of things.<sup>27</sup> Eventually there was a ghetto formed in Czernowitz.<sup>28</sup> Czernowitz had about 50,000 Jews in all ways of life: academics, skilled workers, etcetera. Once the ghetto was established, the deportations started. Deportations had started before in the provinces.<sup>29</sup> These people were deported to the Ukraine, which had been occupied during the *blitz* war that Germany and Romania had gone through there.<sup>30</sup>

As a payment to the Romanians for having participated as a German ally there, a chunk of the Ukraine was placed under Romanian administration. That included the city of Odessa, one of their big ports.<sup>31</sup> This province was called Transnistria, which means the area across the Nistru River or the Dniester River.<sup>32</sup>

Let me warn you this is going to lead to some confusion because there is now a Transnistria, which is sort of a phantom province, which is part of Moldova, but the Russians are playing the same game with them, which they did with [the country of] Georgia and Eastern

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<sup>27</sup> Romanian and German forces occupied Czernowitz on July 5, 1941. Approximately 2,000 Jews were killed in the first few weeks, the synagogue was burned down, and Jewish property was plundered. After the Romanian civil administration took control of the city in July 1941, a series of repressive measures was instituted, depriving Jews of civil and economic rights. After Romania entered the war in 1941, atrocities against Jews became common. Prime Minister Ion Antonescu's regime played a major role in the Holocaust in Romania, and copied the Nazi policies of oppression and genocide of Jews and Gypsies. The yellow badge was imposed in several cities after August 1941 and Romanian Jews were subject to a wide range of harsh conditions, including forced labor, financial penalties, and discriminatory laws. Jews were concentrated into ghettos, deported to concentration camps, or murdered in pogroms and massacres by death squads. It is estimated that at least 250,000 Romanian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

<sup>28</sup> On October 11, 1941, the Jewish population was ordered to relocate before 6 p.m. that day to an area in the eastern part of the city, known as the Jewish district, which was designated as a ghetto. They were permitted to take only what they could carry. The ghetto was encircled with barbed wire, wooden boards, and nets. Romanian gendarmes guarded the entry and exit points. Unsanitary conditions and a lack of available food added to the difficult conditions created by severe overcrowding. Up to 48,000 people inhabited a space that would normally accommodate a few thousand. Deportations commenced on October 13, 1941.

<sup>29</sup> Deportations of the Jews of the Bessarabia, Bukovina, and northern Moldavia regions of Romania began on September 15, 1941 and lasted until October 1942. Deportations were then halted, but began again in summer 1942. From October 1941 to May–June 1942, more than 32,000 people from Czernowitz were deported to various camps and ghettos in Transnistria.

<sup>30</sup> Germany quickly overran much of Europe in the first two years of World War II by relying on a new military tactic called the *Blitzkrieg* [German: lightning war]. *Blitzkrieg* tactics included concentrating offensive weapons (such as tanks, planes, and artillery) along a narrow front in a series of short campaigns. Forces would drive a breach in enemy defenses, allowing tanks to penetrate behind enemy lines while air power prevented the enemy defense from adequately resupplying or redeploying forces. German forces would then encircle opposing troops and force surrender.

<sup>31</sup> Odessa is a port city on the Black Sea in southern Ukraine.

<sup>32</sup> Transnistria is a geographical designation that refers to the area in western Ukraine. It is bounded in the west by the Dniester River, in the east by the Bug River and in the south by the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester [Nistru] and was coined after German and Romanian troops occupied the area in World War II. Transnistria was a Romanian-administered territory, taken from the Soviet Union by Germany after June 1941. Odessa, a Black Sea port, was the administrative capital. Other than Odessa, the region was largely rural and generally impoverished. Romania was given Transnistria as compensation after the Germans took large chunks of Romania and gave it to Hungary, the Soviet Union and Bulgaria.

Ukraine. That is called Transnistria. The geography is different, so if you read something today about Transnistria, it's probably mostly about the new Transnistria. If you read about the history of the Holocaust, it was a bad area, where thousands of people perished.

From 1941 to 1944, we lived under German-Romanian rule. Something very unusual happened. Most Jews from the provinces—nearly all Jews from the provinces—and many Jews from the city—the last ones—had already been deported when a mayor of Czernowitz, whose name was Trajan Popovici,<sup>33</sup> a Romanian lawyer, went to the Governor, [General Corneliu Calotescu] a Romanian general, and told him that he won't be able to run the city because, “If you take all the Jews away, there won't be a doctor here, and there won't be an engineer, and there won't be a lawyer, and there won't be a tinsmith, and there won't be a tailor, etcetera, etcetera.” The Governor told him, “Well, why don't you give me a list of a couple of hundred people?”

This guy wasn't satisfied with it. He had some connections in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, and was able to form a support committee for him, which included, among other things, the Queen Mother of Romania<sup>34</sup>—it was still a Kingdom—[and] the head of the

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<sup>33</sup> Trajan Popovici (1892–1946) was a Romanian lawyer and Mayor of Czernowitz, Romania during the period of deportations in 1941-1942. In June 1942, he received orders to carry out the second wave of deportations of Jews from the town. Instead, he protested to Marshal Antonescu, arguing that the Jews were vital to the economic stability of the town. His protests succeeded. He was ordered to draw lists 20,000 Jews within four days. The Jews who received the exemption from deportation were allowed to return to their homes. Popovici distributed special exemption passes (known as Popovici Permits) well above the quota he was given, and to people who had no professional skills whatsoever. In spring 1942 he was charged with granting permits to "unnecessary" Jews, and was removed from his position. In June 1942 another 5,000 Jews of Czernowitz were deported to Transnistria. Most of them perished, however, the Jews who remaining in Czernowitz survived. In 1969, Yad Vashem recognized Popovici as Righteous Among the Nations.

<sup>34</sup> In 1921, Princess Elena of Greece and Denmark (1896-1982) married Romania's crown prince, who later became King Carol II. The couple had a child, Mihai (Michael), who was crowned King after General Ion Antonescu took control of the country in an alliance with the Iron Guard. Elena assumed the title of Queen Mother. In the summer of 1941, Rabbi Dr. Alexander Safran, the chief rabbi of Romanian Jewry, appealed to the head of the Orthodox Church, the Patriarch Nicodem, to stop the deportations of Romanian Jews to Transnistria. Nicodem went to the Queen Mother, who was very moved upon hearing about the plight of the deported Jews. After turning to various influential people, the Queen Mother and the Patriarch appealed directly to Antonescu. The deportations continued, but due to the intervention of the Queen Mother, the deportation of the philologist Barbu Lazareanu was prevented. At the end of 1941, when news arrived of the desperate state of the Jews expelled to Transnistria, Rabbi Safran again appealed to the Queen Mother for help. She persuaded Antonescu to allow Jewish organizations to send medical aid, clothing and food to the Jews in Transnistria, who were living in ghettos and camps. The help sent in 1942 saved the lives of thousands of Jews who had been deported to Transnistria. The Queen Mother continued with her efforts to prevent the deportation of Jews and applied pressure on her son, the King, to stop the deportations. In 1943 and early 1944, the Queen Mother contributed to the decision to allow the return from Transnistria of thousands of deported Jews, including thousands of Jewish orphans. Six-months later, the orphans were returned. In 1993, Yad Vashem recognized Queen Mother Elena as Righteous Among the Nations.

Orthodox Church, which was a Romanian state religion.<sup>35</sup> It turned out, the apostolic nuncio in Istanbul, an ambassador of the Vatican, was helpful.<sup>36</sup> He later became John XXIII.<sup>37</sup> And other distinguished people. They put some pressure on the Romanian Dictator, Marshal Antonescu.<sup>38</sup> Eventually, after some bickering, he authorized the mayor . . . actually he issued himself about 15,000 so-called authorizations, which allowed the people to stay over the winter—this was October already—and not be deported.<sup>39</sup>

Then you had to find which people will qualify for this. It so happened—I mentioned to you before that my father had distinguished himself organizing the health service for the government railroad. When he died in 1938, the Romanian government awarded a pension to my stepmother and myself. On the basis of this service to the Romanian government railroads, we received an authorization, and stayed in Czernowitz, and were not deported.

In fact, the ghetto was closed and we were able to move back to . . . Actually, I stayed with the parents of my stepmother. We all lived together. They had a very nice house. This happened to fall within the ghetto, so we didn't have to leave it. We didn't have to return to an

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<sup>35</sup> By the summer of 1942, many Bucharest intellectuals and politicians were active in condemning the deportations of Jews. The Romanian Orthodox Church also protested, although until then the leadership of the Church had been traditionally hostile to the Jewish community. Representatives of the Romanian royal house, particularly Queen Mother Elena, made similar efforts.

<sup>36</sup> The Vatican was officially neutral throughout the war—even under Benito Mussolini's Fascist rule and while Rome was later occupied by Germany—yet the role of Pius XII and the Catholic Church during the Holocaust has been the subject of much critical and supportive literature.

<sup>37</sup> Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. He was one of thirteen children born to a family of sharecroppers in a village in the Lombardy region of Italy. He was first ordained as a priest in 1904. In 1925, he became a Vatican diplomat, serving as nuncio in Istanbul, Turkey. During World War II, Roncalli distributed quasi-official looking documents and papers to Jewish refugees seeking to enter Palestine, sending thousands of such documents to the papal nuncio in Budapest, Hungary. Roncalli also personally intervened with the Catholic Queen of Bulgaria, urging her to convince her husband to protect the Jews of that country. At the end of 1944, he was named papal nuncio to Charles de Gaulle's newly liberated France. Roncalli became Pope John XXIII in 1958. Until his death in 1963, his warm, friendly style aside the papacy to a new popularity.

<sup>38</sup> Ion Antonescu (1882-1946) was a Romanian **soldier** and statesman. Antonescu was appointed prime minister with absolute powers on Sept. 4, 1940, after Romania had one-third of its territory partitioned between Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union. He established a military dictatorship and openly embraced the Axis powers. His "National Legionary State" briefly brought the Iron Guard to power as his partner, but, after a period of Guardist revolutionary and criminal excesses, he suppressed the organization. He at first secured widespread popular support for his domestic reform program and, as Germany's ally, for his declaration of war against the U.S.S.R. (1941) in pursuit of recovering Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. His popular support gradually eroded, however, as manpower losses mounted on the Russian front. His regime was finally toppled by a coup d'etat in August 1944 led by King Michael. After the war, he was convicted of war crimes by the Romanian communist people's court and executed.

<sup>39</sup> In the fall of 1941, the governor of Bukovina, General Corneliu Calotescu ordered that between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews were to be selected for their usefulness to the Romanian state. The mayor, Trajan Popovic, was charged with setting up a commission to identify the needed occupations and those people and their families were allowed to stay. The people on this list were issued permits or authorization papers. Popovic distributed permits well above the quota he was allotted and was later removed from office, after which another 4,000-5,000 were deported.

apartment that was usually burglarized or emptied out. We lived there for three years in the city. After the first year, the rule was that if a Romanian dignitary likes a particular house that was occupied by a Jewish family, he just had to point to it. A Romanian colonel liked the house where my Grandfather lived. We had to vacate it within three days.

Fortunately, we were able to find an apartment and rent an apartment. [We] stayed there until March 1944, when the Soviet Army broke through the German front and the Ukraine and advanced about 400 [or] 500 miles.<sup>40</sup> They broke through. The Germans were surrounded there. It was a disaster for them. We were liberated. That was the end of one story.

The people who had been deported, maybe half of them died during deportation.<sup>41</sup> About half survived and somehow were able to wander back to the city. Now we were again liberated by the Soviet Union. But, honestly, none of the survivors felt . . . It would be worse to have survived and spend the rest of your life in the Soviet Union. That's a separate chapter.

Nearly all of the Jewish population of Czernowitz—both those who had remained in the city and those that had returned from deportation—found ways of moving out. Some of them who could prove they had been Polish citizens or born in Poland could leave as part of a population exchange between Poland and the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup> The bulk of people—since they had been Romanian citizens before—after Romania surrendered, the Soviet Union made the “arrangement” for anyone who wanted to move to Romania could move. That took care of the remaining 90 percent of people, who then eventually ended up—nearly all—in Israel or other countries.

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<sup>40</sup>Beginning in April 1944 the Soviet Army had advanced further into Romania, which was still an ally of Germany. In August 1944, Romania was realigned with the Allies after a *coup* deposed Antonescu's regime and put King Michael I in control. Although Romania was then aligned with the Allies, the Soviet army occupied most of Romania as enemy territory until a formal armistice was signed on September 12, 1944 and the army requisitioned whatever resources it could find as it pushed further west toward Germany.

<sup>41</sup> By September 1941, 49,497 Jews lived in the city. By June 1942, more than 32,000 people had been sent to various camps and ghettos in Transnistria. By the time the Red Army recaptured the city in March 1944, two-thirds of Czernowitz's Jewish community had perished.

<sup>42</sup> As eastern European borders were redefined in the immediate aftermath of World War II, a series of population transfers took place between 1944 and 1946. The transfers and resettlements of millions of people were part of an official Soviet policy that used national minorities to create homogenous states. In some cases, the resettlement was voluntary. Alfred's family appears to have taken part in a population exchange that began soon after the Polish-Soviet agreement of September 1944. Ethnic Poles and Jews who were citizens of Poland prior to September 17, 1939 and had expressed a desire to migrate to Poland could do along with members of their immediate families. Compulsory settlement also occurred. About 750,000 Poles and Jews from the western regions of Ukraine were deported, as well as about 200,000 each from western Belarus and from Lithuania. The deportations continued until August 1, 1946.

I think I will stop here. I didn't time myself, but I said it was about ten or fifteen minutes. I hope . . . I forgot the most important thing. I was going to tell you a little bit about the peculiar problems on currency and economy that this population faced.

Before the war, let's say from 1938, Romania had a very strict control of foreign currency. The Romanian currency was the *leu*, L-E-U and plural, L-E-I.<sup>43</sup> They had systems periodically to . . . essentially if you had nothing better to do than put your savings and *lei* under your mattress, in a few years, you had nothing. Some of their message was, for instance, they would exchange the bank notes. You had to come to a bank and within a certain period, exchange all of your bank notes to new bank notes, which now had a face value of, let's say, one-tenth. If you didn't exchange, the money was worthless, so you immediately had maybe one-tenth of what you had before. That happened repeatedly. That was a losing situation.

The people obviously didn't have much faith in the currency of the country and looked for other ways of trying to amass their wealth or savings. There were basically two ways they could do it. One was gold. It was customary there, going back to Turkish times, to collect gold coins. The most popular coins were the French twenty-*franc*—which were called “Napoleons,” or “little beards” because Napoleon the third had a little beard, in the slang<sup>44</sup>—or some British pounds, or dollars. Dollars and gold were the favorite things, but that was against the law.

Romania was not only always sort of a police state, even when they were a democracy; it was also a very corrupt country. You were in the danger that if you stashed away your savings and gold coins and dollars, you might be discovered, and everything would be confiscated, and you may wind up in jail unless you know how to get yourself bought out. That gives you a taste of the difficulties people had to put on. They did, however, do what they had to do. Usually—and certainly the middle class—would stash their savings away in gold coins or dollar notes.

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<sup>43</sup> The Romanian *leu* [Romanian: lion; plural, *lei*] is the currency of Romania. The first *leu* coin was minted in Romania in 1870, but its exchange value was extremely low compared to the Russian *ruble*. In 1889, Romania adopted the gold standard and the *lei*'s value improved. Yet, because the Romanian mint issued such small quantities of *lei* and all taxes and custom dues were to be paid in gold, foreign gold coins were more popular, especially French 20-*franc* pieces (equal to 20 *lei*). Romania left the gold standard in 1914 and the *leu*'s value fell. In 1929, the exchange rate was 167 *leu* to one US dollar. By 1940, it was 204 *leu* to one US Dollar. During Soviet occupation, the exchange rate was 1 *ruble* to 100 *lei*. After World War II, the value of the currency fell dramatically again. A new *leu* was issued in 1947 that was equivalent in value to 20,000 of the old *leu*.

<sup>44</sup> Napoleon III (1808-1873), the nephew of Napoleon I and cousin of Napoleon II, was the first president of France from 1848 to 1852. Following his presidency he became the Emperor of France and the Second French Empire between 1852 and 1870. During that time, his profile image appeared on gold twenty *Franc* coins crowned with a laureate wreath like the Roman Emperors.

When the Soviets occupied, you had to exchange your Romanian bank notes for Soviet bank notes—that was another cut—or else the Romanian bank notes weren't worth anything. Under the Soviets, it was even much more stringent because the Soviets were . . . For small transgressions in their rules, you could end up in Siberia, so it was very difficult.<sup>45</sup>

We are now at the time when the people were being deported. Now they had the problem [of wondering], what could they take with them? When you see the picture these days of these refugees in Austria and Hungary and that was about the picture. What could they take with them that would permit them to buy some bread or something else? If you had a diamond, you sewed them into your clothing. If you had some gold coins, it was more difficult but people figured out ways of doing it. If you had dollars, there were all kinds of tricks of how to hide this on your body or in your clothing.

**Mike:** Alfred, who would you sell them to?

**Alfred:** There were people who traded. The problem was it was large denominations. If you had a hundred dollar bill, you had difficulty selling it. When I left Czernowitz in 1945, an uncle of mine gave me five single dollar bills. They were the long dollar bills, so that tells you how long they've been around there.<sup>46</sup> They were not circulating in the States anymore.

There were people. They were not particularly respected, but [they] were the currency dealers. I should have mentioned on the economics, Czernowitz had a commodity exchange. The father of my stepmother was a member of the exchange. He was an exporter of grain to Central Europe and Western Europe.

The people that generally lost all their real state and seemed to head out there, if they were lucky, they maybe had ten gold coins, or maybe a hundred dollars in bills, or maybe a diamond or two. The question was difficult especially for those who were deported because obviously if they didn't come out alive from this, whatever they had got lost with them. In fact,

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<sup>45</sup> For the Jewish population, the Soviet occupation replaced racial persecution with the terrible experience of Communist social egalitarianism and Stalinist terror. In early June 1941, the Soviet authorities deported some 3,000 Jewish business owners and intellectuals to labor camps in Siberia, central Asia, and other locations deep in the interior of the Soviet Union. The labor camps were used as a form of political repression and prisoners were often worked to death. Many died in appalling conditions. In mid-June 1941, thousands more were deported.

<sup>46</sup> United States paper bank notes (dollars) issued between 1861 and 1929 were almost twice as large as today's currency. In 1929, the Treasury Department changed to a smaller size, believing it would reduce the costs of production, paper and ink. Most large-size notes measure 7.5 inches by 3.125 inches. The new size would be 6.14 by 2.61 inches. The large-size notes remained legal to use but were gradually withdrawn and replaced with their smaller counterparts.

to this day, there are continuously graves at the cemetery being dug up by gold seekers. They have a difficult time protecting the cemeteries.

When the people arrived then in these camps out there—again, those who survived—my uncle, who was a fortunate guy because he had a tin can with jam with a false bottom where he had a few gold coins, and that came though so he was able to buy something. He survived the war and eventually he wound up in Australia.

Should I continue now with what happened after the erasure or should I go back to your questions?

**Adina:** I think maybe it makes sense now to go back to the beginning. I think this is an excellent overview of your understanding of the region, and of the people, and kind of the overall economic situation. We will probably come back to touching on a lot of the things you brought up.

**Alfred:** You had questions about education?

**Adina:** We will definitely get into all of that. It might make sense to go back to the beginning a little and focus on your family. Can you talk a little bit about how your family in particular came to be in Czernowitz?

**Alfred:** On my father's side, I did have some documents going back about four generations. I think I had a birth certificate of my grandfather in which the personal data for his father—they were Schneider's—was mentioned there. I guess he had probably lived in Bukovina since the beginning of the nineteenth century. He did not live in Czernowitz. They lived in a small town not too far from Czernowitz. I guess he was a religious person. He had a general store and nine children.

My father was one of the youngest ones. He was the only one to leave the house to go to Czernowitz for his secondary education. Then he went to Vienna to study medicine. Just about two months before he was finished, World War I started. He was drafted and he spent the next four years as a medical officer on the front there, first in Italy and then the Ukraine. These were people who had lived in this province for a very long time.

On my mother's side . . .

**Adina:** Can I interrupt you for one second? Do you know the name of the small town?

**Alfred:** Of course. The name is B-O-J-A-N.<sup>47</sup> Its claim to fame is that it was the center of a famous Hassidic dynasty.<sup>48</sup>

**Adina:** They were Schneider's. They were Jews with a relationship with the German language already?

**Alfred:** That was a transition period. I would guess that my great-grandfather spoke Yiddish.<sup>49</sup> As you move in generations, it became more and more German to the point that my father spoke, of course, perfect German. He studied German in high school. I, of course was born after the war, and did not speak any Romanian until I went to the public school. My native language was German—a petty good German, but accented.

**Adina:** We will get back to your father and his experiences, but if you wanted to talk a little bit about your mother's family, that would be good, too.

**Alfred:** My mother's family . . . on my grandmother's side, they also lived about three or four generations in a small village in the highlands. One of my great-grandfathers I guess was the mayor of the village. They were all in the lumber business. They pioneered the introduction of the steam . . . first of all, there were water driven lumber mills. Then they introduced—one of my great grandfathers introduced—a steam engine for his lumber mills. My grandfather came from . . . it was Poland later, the [same] area that my wife comes from.

Again, in my case it was rather interesting because I learned how to speak Yiddish during the war. In the beginning—I mean, before the war—there were some boys in my town there that spoke Yiddish. They were from Hassidic families. I thought that I could discuss with them, but as I found out later, it wasn't Yiddish. It was a willfully distorted German. They way some white people try to talk the way black people talk and it isn't quite right.

**Adina:** That is interesting. Your father went to Vienna for medical school. You said he was one of nine children. Was he the only one to go on for higher education?

**Alfred:** Right, I said that. His mother was pretty unhappy. She felt that that was going to weaken his religious background. She was right.

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<sup>47</sup> Boyany [German: Bojan; Romanian: Boian] is a village located approximately 14 kilometers (9 miles) east of the city of Chernivitsi. It became a Hasidic center when R. Isaac Fridman settled there in 1886. When the Russians occupied the city in World War I, the Jewish quarter was destroyed and most of the Jews fled. By 1930, there were only 118 Jews in the village, all of whom were deported to Transnistria in 1941.

<sup>48</sup> Hasidic Judaism refers to a branch of Orthodox Judaism that maintains a lifestyle separate from the non-Jewish world.

<sup>49</sup> Yiddish is the common historical language of Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. It is heavily Germanic based but uses the Hebrew alphabet. The language was spoken or understood as a common tongue for many European Jews up until the middle of the twentieth century.

**Adina:** Did he work during that time in order to pay for medical school? How did that work? Do you know?

**Alfred:** I guess the family helped him out probably. My grandfather was fairly well off before the war. They lost everything in the war. The place was occupied by the Czar's army and everything was burned down.

**Adina:** This was World War I?

**Alfred:** World War I.

**Adina:** Your father then spent, after medical school . . . He graduated before the beginning of the war?

**Alfred:** No, he didn't actually get his diploma, so he went back to Vienna after the collapse of the [Austrian] Empire. It took a couple a years before the universities were back in business. He had to take maybe one course. His original diploma was lost during the war, but on my first visit to Vienna, I went to the University. I went to the registrar and asked him, "Could I get a copy of my dad's diploma?" It took him two minutes. He asked me approximately what year. He found the data [and] printed an ersatz diploma on ersatz parchment. [It was] very beautiful, with a big shield in a box, and sent it to me in South Carolina, where we lived at that time.

**Adina:** That is great.

**Alfred:** The diploma is dated 1922.

**Adina:** At that point, does he go directly back to Czernowitz?

**Alfred:** Yes, he did because his family, but this was now a different country. Then he met my mother. They married in 1923. She was also one of nine children.

**Adina:** Did your mother have any higher education?

**Alfred:** Yes. She was sent to Czernowitz when she was a teenager and had several tutors. But she did not formally attend high school.

**Adina:** Your immediate family . . . I may ask a little bit about both, but at that point in Czernowitz, would you consider your immediate family middle class? Where they slightly upper middle class? Where did they fit on that scale at that point?

**Alfred:** First of all, when my father lived—he died in 1938—we lived not far from Czernowitz in a small town. The name of that town was Vyzhnytsia.<sup>50</sup>

**Adina:** Can you spell that, please?

**Alfred:** Let me spell the Austrian name. W-I-Z-N-I-T-Z.

**Adina:** They lived there from 1923 until 1938?

**Alfred:** Yes. My mother died when I was four years old. Then my father remarried. After he died, I stayed with my stepmother.

**Adina:** In Vyzhnytsia, what kind of a medical practice did your father have?

**Alfred:** He had specialized in Vienna in Ob-Gyn [obstetrics and gynecology]. But during the war, he was a jack-of-all-trades. He learned how to extract teeth, mend bones, and amputate things. He was a general practitioner but he leaned towards Ob-Gyn things. Unfortunately, he died while he was delivering a pair of twins in 1938.

**Adina:** Did he die unexpectedly?

**Alfred:** Yes, a heart attack.

**Mike:** Alfred, would you say that your family at this point was prosperous?

**Alfred:** I would say so by comparison with the population. You asked some questions about vacation and you will see that. I would say that . . . We were not familiar with the classifications of middle class, upper middle class, but by analogy, I would say it's probably upper middle class.

**Adina:** In this small town, where you lived . . . Were you born in this small town?

**Alfred:** No.

**Adina:** You were born in Czernowitz and then you went back there?

**Alfred:** Yes. After my father died, his practice was sold. My stepmother and I moved to Czernowitz. She was a very energetic lady. She managed to get me accepted in one of the elite schools in Czernowitz. I'll tell you more when you ask about education.

**Adina:** I'm just trying to place you at this point as a young child. You lived in Vizhnitsa as a small child. Were there many Jews there?

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<sup>50</sup> Vyzhnytsia [also Vizhnitsa; Yiddish: Vizhnits; German: Wischnitz; Romanian: *Vijnița*] Vyzhnytsia is a town located in the historical region of Bukovina, in western Ukraine. It is approximately 56 kilometers (35 miles) west of the city of Chernivtsi. The town derives its fame from the local Hasidic rabbis. During World War I, the town was nearly destroyed. Many Jews fled to Vienna and did not return. In August 1941, 2,800 Jews were deported to death camps. About 800 survived and most immigrated to Israel.

**Alfred:** About 90 percent of the city was. It was also, by coincidence, the head of a Hasidic dynasty, but we were not . . . My father was a doctor for the wife of the leader of that thing, but . . .

**Adina:** Was he paid in the Romanian currency at that time?

**Alfred:** Right, it was the only official [currency]. He was paid in Romanian currency. He got his salary from the railroad system. For a while, he was also the doctor for the . . . let's call it social security. It was a government health service—minimal—for workers.

**Adina:** With that money that he received in payment for his services, did he keep that in a bank? What did he do with that?

**Alfred:** That brings me back to what I said before. When he died . . . To show you how things were dissipated in Europe, for instance, he had taken out a life insurance [policy] on his life—with [me] as the beneficiary—when I was born. Because of the uncertainty of Romania at that time, he bought this life insurance from a company in Vienna, the Dernou Company. I guess at that time, they weren't anxious for him to send the payments in the Romanian currency, so he committed to pay the premiums in dollars. I remember as I grew up, there were perennial problems in how he was getting . . . some way, he had a cousin who lived in Poland. Poland had an open exchange market. That guy would get the dollars to the insurance company.

The savings that he had [was] he had a collection of gold coins. When he died, my stepmother—she was relatively well off; her parents were—she said, “Whatever is there, it shouldn't be to my benefit.” This was now . . . My father died in December of 1938, so we are in 1939. It's still Romania. There was a family council [of] my biological mother's family, and my father's family, and my stepmother's family. What should they do? First of all, the insurance now had to be cleared through a court in Vienna, which means the money had to be transmitted through the Romanian national bank, which gave you a ridiculous rate, so here there was something that . . . a hundred thousand *leis* . . . It was next to nothing after he paid for it for twelve years.

The gold coins are unfortunately another sad story. My stepmother's father, who I told you was a very well known merchant and member of the commodities exchange, he sort of set the tone in this family council. To quote him, he said, “One thing that doesn't have any legs is a house.” They managed to convert these gold coins to local currency and bought for me a six-

apartment house. They figured out that that's more than enough from the rent for me to live. In fact, they were going to set aside money so that I could study in England. This was 1939.

In 1940, the Soviet Union occupied that and Uncle Joe<sup>51</sup> decided I don't need a house; it would be better if they nationalized it.<sup>52</sup> That was the end of it, a lifetime's worth.

**Mike:** Uncle Joe was Stalin?

**Adina:** Joseph Stalin, yes. How old were you at that point?

**Alfred:** I was about thirteen or fourteen.

**Adina:** Okay. Before your father died and before all of this change happened between Romania and the Soviet occupation, what was a typical shopping interaction like with your family? Who did the shopping and what did they buy?

**Alfred:** It was a small town, population of about 5,000. The shopping was done once a week. There was a big market. The peasants would bring in their fresh butter, and cheese, and eggs, and vegetables, other greens, and chickens. You'd buy there for a whole week. We didn't have refrigerators, but we had iceboxes so we could keep stuff there. It was daily deliveries of ice blocks. The rest of it, there were stores where you bought flour. There were butchers and there were bakers. At this time, transactions were simply cash, normal things.

**Adina:** There was no trading?

**Alfred:** Not at that time.

**Adina:** What about clothing? How was that made?

**Alfred:** Clothing was different than what you have here. Most clothing was custom made. As children, we resented that. You had to go, and try things on, stand quietly for fifteen minutes, and so forth.

**Adina:** Within your family, was there a break after your mother passed away and before your stepmother was there in the family?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** How long was that?

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<sup>51</sup> Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin (1878-1953) was the leader of the Soviet Union from the mid- 1920's until his death. He is considered one of the most powerful and murderous dictators in history. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called Stalin "Uncle Joe" in an attempt to please Stalin, encourage a more positive public perception among Americans who had been reluctant to enter World War II as a Soviet ally, and as a means of encouraging postwar democracy.

<sup>52</sup> Under the Soviet occupation, policies of nationalization were rapidly enforced. Individual businesses, farms and even many homes became state-owned properties with the former private owners rarely compensated.

**Alfred:** There were other complications. A few months after my mother died, my father got very ill. He had rheumatic fever.<sup>53</sup> He couldn't walk. A younger brother of my mother's took him to Piestany [Czechoslovakia].<sup>54</sup> There was a very famous resort place in Czechoslovakia. He stayed there for about a year. During this time, I stayed at my biological grandmother's. A younger sister of my mother's—she was not married at the time—she took care of me. Then he came back and I moved back home. I had a governess for two years.

**Adina:** The medical care—the cost of going to this special resort town for the rheumatic fever—was that costly? Was that something that was relatively easy to afford?

**Alfred:** It was costly but we had a little break. Because my father was a physician for the government railroads, we had free passes for first class so we knew Romania very well. We would go every year for one month there. Romania was a very beautiful country. It had the Black Sea,<sup>55</sup> and the Carpathian Mountains, and the Danube [River].<sup>56</sup> I acquired as a small child quite a view of other places.

I don't know whether you're going to come to this, but I noticed in your questions that you're interested in that sort of thing. That [was] an exceptional concern of my parents, for my father for education . . . Yes, there were music lessons. Yes, there was a piano in my house. I started piano lessons at the age of six. My father was convinced that I am a child prodigy. I didn't disappoint him. Eighty years later, I'm still a child prodigy.

When I was ten, trying to keep up with the modern tastes for music—his musical memories were the Viennese operettas and that kind of thing—I wanted to get an accordion because there was more current music. I got an accordion and got [to play] very well. It actually helped me later in the war for a year or year and a half, as a professional musician, to keep afloat.

At a young age, I had several tutors in addition to music. I had Hebrew lessons. It wasn't very successful. I didn't particularly care for the teacher. I also had French lessons with a tutor

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<sup>53</sup> Rheumatic Fever is a disease that can result from inadequately treated strep throat or scarlet fever. It causes inflammation, especially of the heart, blood vessels, and joints. Symptoms include fever and painful, tender joints. Treatment involves medication, sometimes for life.

<sup>54</sup> Piestany [German: Pistyan, Hungarian: Pöstyén, Polish: Pieszczany, Czech: Píšťany] is a popular spa town in western Slovakia.

<sup>55</sup> The Black Sea is a body of water and marginal sea of the Atlantic Ocean between Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Western Asia. It is supplied by a number of major rivers, such as the Danube, Dnieper, Southern Bug, Dniester, Don, and the Rioni.

<sup>56</sup> The Danube is Europe's second longest river, after the Volga. It is located in Central and Eastern Europe. The Danube was once a long-standing frontier of the Roman Empire, and today flows through 10 countries, more than any other river in the world.

and general education—for instance, about Egyptians, pyramids and so forth. This was before I got to school.

**Adina:** This was before? This was with a series of private tutors? Or, more than one tutor for each different subject?

**Alfred:** Yes. At the time, I had a music teacher, a Hebrew teacher, and a general education teacher.

**Adina:** Where did your family find these teachers? How did they advertise for the position?

**Alfred:** The music teacher was well established in town there. Her husband was a lawyer.

**Adina:** This was the small town of Vyzhnytsia?

**Alfred:** Right. The Hebrew teacher was just a housewife and not a very good teacher. Unfortunately, I never learned very much Hebrew except the history.

**Adina:** Did your father pay these teachers in currency?

**Alfred:** Yes, in currency. During this period, there was no barter. There would be occasionally, I don't know, that a tailor would be a patient of my father's who'd complain he was short in cash and [ask] could my father hold off the payment until he needs a new suit.

**Adina:** The credit system was kind of more verbal assurances and that kind of thing?

**Alfred:** Yes. It is very interesting in that period of time—you may get this from other people—that the Jewish population was not very comfortable with the Romanian court system, so the merchants developed a rather elaborate arbitration court system. Again, the father of my stepmother and the father of Lord Eric Roll were part of the local arbitration court there. They would prefer to go to arbitration court. I sometimes sat in there as a young boy. I was very much impressed by it. It was on a voluntary basis but they would follow this.

**Adina:** Where did this court take place? Did it have a space of its own or did it move?

**Alfred:** No, they'd meet in a lawyer's office or in an apartment. Very little formalities.

**Mike:** What sort of disputes would they resolve?

**Alfred:** These were commercial disputes. He shipped him a railroad car of grain and the guy claimed the specifications were not met. The usual things.

**Adina:** Was this something that was legal within the Romanian system?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** Going back to your education a little bit, when did you start formal school?

**Alfred:** When I was seven years old.

**Adina:** What was that like?

**Alfred:** I went to a public school where the language of instruction was Romanian. My teacher in first grade, however, was a take over from Austria who didn't speak any Romanian. It was very broken Romanian. But subsequently, I had a very good Romanian education. This is where I learned the language. It helped me later on because Romanian is a Latin language. Without having studied Italian, for instance, or Spanish, I can pretty well make out what's in an Italian or Spanish newspaper. French was considered the . . . There's no English so far. You haven't heard any English. That comes later.

**Adina:** Sure. During this time, still as a young child, you mentioned that you traveled. Was there a regular vacation time?

**Alfred:** Yes. I'd have school vacation in the summer for about two months.

**Adina:** Did your father go on these trips as well?

**Alfred:** Under the urging of my stepmother. He always claimed he was too busy. We would go for one month. My vacation was two months.

**Adina:** Always to different places or sometimes to the same places?

**Alfred:** I think in one case we went to the same place twice. We would go to different places. As I said, to various parts of Romania.

**Adina:** What else was the rhythm of your week like? Did your father work six days a week and then you had time together or was he working most of the time?

**Alfred:** This was very different from the way a doctor arranges his life here in the United States. They didn't have anybody who'd fill in or cover you. There'd be all individual doctors. I remember my father . . . Normal deliveries, they wouldn't call the doctor. It'd be a midwife. But when there were complications, they'd call the doctor. I remember every night, he'd say, "Gee, I hope I can sleep a few hours." But they'd pull him out of bed two or three times. He learned how to sleep in installments during the day in order to . . .

**Adina:** Did he have nurses working with him?

**Alfred:** Yes, he occasionally [did] when he needed an assistant.

**Adina:** Did your stepmother work as well or did she take care of the household?

**Alfred:** No, she took care of the household. There was a lot of work in the household.

**Adina:** Other than your tutors, did you have any servants or assistance in the household?

**Alfred:** Yes, we had a maid.

**Adina:** Where did she come from?

**Alfred:** She was from the local population and she spoke Ruthenian, which is a Ukrainian dialect. That was my introduction to a Slavic language. It served me later on when I had to study Russian during that year. But [it was] not good enough to understand Polish, so when I met my wife after the war, we had no common language. She spoke only Polish and I didn't.

**Adina:** There was the same maid in your house for a number of years?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** When you say local population, was she Jewish or non-Jewish?

**Alfred:** No. She was Ukrainian. In fact, it was a very moving story. During the war, when we lived in Czernowitz . . . I didn't spend much time telling you what the circumstance were, but there were limited hours we could circulate. We had to wear a yellow star and there was no school for Jews. One day, she showed up. I think she went by foot for forty or fifty miles with a big bag of everything—potatoes, and beets, and so forth. She heard there was a food shortage in the big city of Czernowitz. She wanted to bring us some food. That gives you a taste of the relations there. It's hard to understand because of what followed later on, but relations were quite friendly there.

**Adina:** Before your father died, you mentioned that he had taken out this life insurance policy and that there had been some hope that money could be saved for your future. What were your family's hopes and dreams for your future at that time in terms of education and living arrangements?

**Alfred:** I had to finish the gymnasium, which is eight years after the four years of elementary school. [A total of] twelve years just like here. Romania had a number of universities. I was interested in chemistry from an early age. I had my own laboratory. But problems were starting to develop with *numerous clausus* and admissions there, so many of the young people of that area went aboard to study.<sup>57</sup> They studied in Czechoslovakia, and Belgium, and France, and

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<sup>57</sup> *Numerous clausus* [Latin: closed term] is a term that refers to anti-Jewish policies that limited Jews from certain professions, public offices and institutes of higher education by applying fixed quotas. In general, *numerus clausus* policies were religious or racial quotas used to discriminate against Jews in Eastern Europe. Such policies were not unique to the Holocaust, but gained favor in the inter-war period leading up to the Holocaust. For example, in 1920, Hungary had enacted a *numerus clausus* that placed a ceiling of six percent on the amount of Jewish students allowed in institutes of higher education.

England—England not too many—Italy . . . This was sort of a dream that I may have enough money to study in England.

For instance, this borders on money but it may give you a little taste of family relations. My father had two nieces, two daughters of his sister's, who in turn was one of those eight or nine children. They wanted to study medicine and couldn't do it in Romania, so they went to France and studied in France. Their parents were of rather limited means, so my father helped out. Three sisters survived. Two who eventually became MDs. One lived in Vienna after the war and eventually wound up with three doctorates. The other lived in Germany. I told them that Tosia, my wife, and I had been working on establishing an educational trust for our grandchildren.<sup>58</sup> We have five grandchildren. In a sense, they made a sizable contribution to our trust as a repayment of what my father in the 1930s helped them get through medical school.

**Adina:** When you mention the *numerous clausus*, I learned about that in the context of Poland. It was the same in Romania?

**Alfred:** In Poland, it was more formalized, but it was starting in Romania. I think we were a little better of than the people who were in Poland.

**Adina:** We have about ten minutes left. I think that most likely the next time we talk, we will start with the beginning of the Russian occupation because that changed things pretty drastically. To finish up this section, you mentioned that your father helped his nieces. Were there other ways in which he gave charity or helped your family?

**Alfred:** Yes. You asked the question were his philanthropic expenses exclusively for Jewish associations. No, they were not. I have been trying with the [William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum] here with limited success<sup>59</sup> . . . Most people have visions of life a small town there as pretty much a *Fiddler on the Roof*.<sup>60</sup> It was not. We did not live in a segregated society.

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<sup>58</sup> Tosia Szecher Schneider (1929-) was born in Zaleszczyki, Poland and survived multiple ghettos and a labor camp. Her parents and brother died during the Holocaust. Tosia and Alfred met in Romania after liberation. The couple was reunited after both immigrated to the United States and married in 1950. Like Alfred, she has been active in sharing her experiences. Her testimony is available in the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum's archive. Her book, *Someone Must Survive to Tell the World*, was published in 2007.

<sup>59</sup> In 1992, M. William Breman gave the lead gift, ensuring the creation of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum. In 1996, the museum opened at the Selig Center on Spring Street in Midtown Atlanta. The Museum features a permanent exhibit called *Absence of Humanity: The Holocaust Years, 1933-1945* as well as exhibitions about Southern Jewish history and Jewish culture. The Breman Museum also includes the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History, the Weinberg Center for Holocaust Education, and a library of research materials.

<sup>60</sup> The Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof* was based on *Tevye and his Daughters* (or *Tevye the Dairyman*), a series of stories by Sholem Aleichem that he wrote in Yiddish between 1894 and 1914 about Jewish life in a village in the Pale of Settlement of Imperial Russia at the turn of the 20th century.

For example, when my mother died, they wanted me out of the house. I remember I was four years old and that was my first Christmas because friends of my family . . . He was a judge with two children. They were Catholic. I stayed with them for about a week and I had my first Christmas. That's about the farthest memory I have.

**Adina:** How did your mother die?

**Alfred:** She died of pneumonia. She was the wife of an MD but there was nothing they could do at that time. There were no antibiotics.

**Adina:** It was just a secondary infection from some other . . .

**Alfred:** She was expecting another child.

**Adina:** Do you have any half-siblings or any siblings?

**Alfred:** No.

**Adina:** You're the only child?

**Alfred:** Only child.

**Adina:** One last thing. You mentioned your first Christmas. Did your family also celebrate Jewish holidays in a big way or in a small way?

**Alfred:** It's not too different from America here. We went to services on New Years, on High Holy Days,<sup>61</sup> and sometimes on Passover.<sup>62</sup> However, when my father passed away, I was about twelve years old. I did decide that I would go twice a day to the synagogue and say the *Kaddish*.<sup>63</sup> I stuck it out. It was not a religious thing, but I somehow felt an urge to do it.

**Adina:** Did you join up with you extended family for holidays at all?

**Alfred:** Yes. For instance, for one month of our vacation—the one that I did not travel with my parents—I'd spend on a model farm that my uncle ran there. It was a very integrated

<sup>61</sup> The two High Holy Days are *Rosh Ha-Shanah* (Jewish New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).

<sup>62</sup> Passover [Hebrew: *Pesach*] is the anniversary of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage. The holiday lasts for eight days. Unleavened bread, *matzah*, is eaten in memory of the unleavened bread prepared by the Israelite during their hasty flight from Egypt, when they had not time to wait for the dough to rise. On the first two nights of Passover, the *seder*, the central event of the holiday is celebrated. The *seder* service is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life. In addition to eating *matzah* during the *seder*, Jews are prohibited from eating leavened bread during the entire week of Passover. In addition, Jews are also supposed to avoid foods made with wheat, barley, rye, spelt or oats unless those foods are labeled 'kosher for Passover.' Jews traditionally have separate dishes for Passover.

<sup>63</sup> *Kaddish* [Hebrew: holy] is a hymn of praises to G-d found in the Jewish prayer service that is recited aloud while standing. The central theme of the *Kaddish* is the magnification and sanctification of G-d's name. Along with the *Shema* and *Amidah*, the *Kaddish* is one of the most important and central elements in the Jewish liturgy. Mourner's *Kaddish* is said at all prayer services and certain other occasions. Following the death of a parent, child, spouse, or sibling it is customary to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish* in the presence of a congregation daily for 30 days, or 11 months in the case of a parent, and then at every anniversary of the death. It is important to note that the Mourner's *Kaddish* does not mention death at all, but instead praises G-d.

farm. They would grow potatoes and they had a distillery. They would make alcohol from potatoes. Then the mash that they would get as a byproduct was used to fatten cattle so they would grow. It was a paradise for a young boy. There were horses, and calves, and tractors. I'd usually stay with them.

**Adina:** Sounds like a lot of fun. Thinking one more time about the holidays. Were there larger expenditures than on a normal basis around the holidays? Was money ever saved up for celebrations?

**Alfred:** Yes, especially at Passover. My wife is in much better shape. She's talked about this. The house would be cleaned from top to bottom, everything hand scrubbing. The children would usually get a new outfit for it. The meals were special.

**Adina:** Did you spend Passover with your relatives at all?

**Alfred:** Yes, I would sometimes go to my grandmother's. My grandparents lived about ten miles from us.

**Adina:** The one last question I will ask you now would be about other kinds of luxury items. Were there musical instruments? Did you think of music as a luxury item or was that something that was just kind of important to . . .

**Alfred:** There was a room called a dining room, *speisezimmer* in German. Under normal circumstances, I wasn't supposed to set foot in it. There was very nice furniture. My parents ordered it from Vienna. It was quite nice furniture. It was used when we had visitors. Otherwise, it was [off limits].

**Adina:** Was the piano in that room or was it in a different space?

**Alfred:** No, the piano was in my room. It was an upright piano. I don't know when you want to fit it in. You'll wind up probably wondering how did I manage spending three years during the war without access to schools, and determined afterwards to get an education, and my career at MIT. I'd be glad to share it with you.

**Adina:** We definitely would like to get into all of that. Would you be willing to come back again and speak with me at some point?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** Because I don't think we can cover that in any really meaningful way in the next [few minutes].

<End Disc 1>

<Begin Disc 2>

**Adina:** When we last spoke with you, Fred, we left off at the beginning of the war in 1939. You had just returned to Czernowitz. Can you start by describing where you lived at this time and what the community was like? You had just started to tell us a little bit about the state of the Jewish community in Czernowitz at the beginning of the war. If you can, continue with that.

**Alfred:** Right. September 1, 1939 is officially the beginning of World War II.<sup>64</sup> That's when the Germans attacked Poland. I lived on that date in a province called Bukovina, which had been for the preceding approximately two centuries part of the Austrian Empire. After the Treaty of Versailles, it became part of Romania. In 1939, this was Romania.

The city where we lived was in the proximity of the border with Poland, so we did have war just maybe 40 or 50 miles from where we lived, but Romania was not at war. It was a neutral country at that time. After the collapse of Poland, most of the Polish government, and Polish army, and air force fled through this province. Many of them later managed to make it to France or England and fought in the units of the free Polish Army with the Allies.<sup>65</sup>

We still lived relatively peaceful in 1939 until June 1940, when the Soviet Union, as a corollary of the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany, gave an ultimatum to Romania and occupied two provinces within twenty-four hours, including the city where I lived, which had never before been part of Russia-Czarist or any other one. That was a big change, of course. There was turmoil. People were fleeing. There wasn't any fighting as such, but dislocations. Starting in June 1940, we were suddenly part of the Soviet Union.

**Adina:** Where did you live at that time? Who did you live with? What was your home like?

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<sup>64</sup> World War II officially began in Europe when Germany invaded Poland on Friday, September 1, 1939. Britain and France responded by declaring war on Germany on September 3. Within a month, Poland was defeated by a combination of German and Soviet forces and was partitioned between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

<sup>65</sup> Even after the Polish Army was defeated in 1939, it was recreated in the West and East and continued to contribute to defeating Germany in World War II. The Polish Armed in the West refers to the Polish military formations formed to fight alongside the Western Allies against Nazi Germany and its allies during World War II. The formations, loyal to the Polish government-in-exile, were first formed in France. After France fell to Germany in June 1940, the formations were recreated in the United Kingdom. Polish forces were also raised within Soviet territories; these were the Polish Armed Forces in the East. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Soviet Union reestablished diplomatic relations with the Polish government-in-exile. In July 1941, they agreed to grant amnesty to many of the Polish citizens (including Jews) who had reached the interior of the Soviet Union and were interned in Soviet prisons and labor camps. The Soviet Union also agreed to the formation of a Polish Army under a commander appointed by the Polish government-in-exile. Thousands of Jews from the masses of Polish refugees, deportees, and prisoners of war joined the Polish Army under General Wladyslaw Anders.

**Alfred:** My case was a special case. I had lost my parent; my mother when I was four years old and my father when I was twelve years old. I had lived with my stepmother and her family in Czernowitz. We attended Soviet middle schools. As I mentioned before, my main source of support was an apartment house, which I inherited from my father, who was an MD. But that was shortly nationalized, so that source of income had vanished.

**Adina:** At this point, how large was the Jewish community in Czernowitz?

**Alfred:** Czernowitz had a population of about 110,000 people. About 50 percent of the population was Jewish. Again, it was unusual because the majority of the people—Jews and non-Jews—spoke German and continued to speak German after this part became Romania, to the disappointment of the Romanians, who tried to Romanize these things. There was a German university, which had to change languages. There were German theaters that changed languages. Movies that were shown there were almost exclusively in Austrian or German.

The occupational things changed because Czernowitz was a center of commerce at the intersection of the North, South, East, and Western Europe with the export of grains, and fruits, and lumber, textiles, and so forth. That all came to end, so most of these people became unemployed or took jobs. Whatever job you had, you worked for the government. If you were a barber, you worked for the government.

**Adina:** Did your stepmother work at this time?

**Alfred:** Yes, she had an office job.

**Adina:** For the Russian occupying government?

**Alfred:** Yes, I think it had something to do with a grain-testing laboratory.

**Adina:** Did anyone else in your immediate family that you lived with work at that time?

**Alfred:** They had menial jobs. I had an uncle who, with his brother and brother-in-law, owned a wholesale flour business. They were, of course, put on a bad list. He got a job as a night watchman. He actually died shortly thereafter.

**Adina:** How were they paid for their work? Were they paid in Russian currency?

**Alfred:** Yes, they were paid in the rubles.<sup>66</sup> The situation was that when the Russians came, we had some very western like stores—fashion stores, delicatessen stores, and so forth—which were still stocked when the Russians came. Within a couple weeks, they bought out

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<sup>66</sup> The ruble is the currency unit of Russia (and the former Soviet Union) and Belarus [*rubel*].

everything and there were no replenishing those things. Shortages started to develop. After a few months, you started to get some imports but very poor, very shoddy quality and very unusual. There'd be a week where you could buy galoshes. Then that would vanish and you might be able to buy scarves the next week.

**Adina:** Did you or people you knew buy these things, hoping to trade them later?

**Alfred:** No, they were on the selling part. One source of income [was that] people would sell whatever they had. They had well equipped apartments still at that time. The Russians were buying it, so you had open-air markets. There were local jokes that some of the buyers would buy night clothing but think that they were street clothing. These were anecdotal things.

**Adina:** Was there any rationing that started when there became shortages?

**Alfred:** No, there wasn't rationing as such, but there were long lines, which we had not known before the war. You had to stand in a bread line or other such things. Especially the surrounding area was usually a pretty abundant source for vegetables and fruits, so we didn't starve. We had enough food.

**Adina:** Did you ever go and purchase items for your family? Was that ever a task that you had at that time?

**Alfred:** Yes, this was interesting. I was quite young still at that time.

**Adina:** How old were you?

**Alfred:** In 1940, I was about thirteen or fourteen years old. But I had a new job and that was to hold somebody's place in a line. I didn't do the actual purchasing. When I got close to the door, my aunt would get there.

**Adina:** What was a typical day like for you under Russian occupation?

**Alfred:** There were some good things. There were some bad things. In general, we liked the school. Now it may sound funny, but it was the first time we were in schools that were coeducational. Before that, boys were separated; girls were separated. That was an exciting time for us. There was also a lot of extracurricular stuff for us. There were orchestras. There were choirs. There were ski clubs, ice-skating clubs, volleyball.

It was a little strange for us, the indoctrination. We were somewhat young to get . . . There were, for instance, anti-religious things in schools.<sup>67</sup> When they knew that a group of people were either Christian or Jewish and they had a holiday, they made sure that there was some reason for them to be in school rather than with their family.

**Adina:** Were there any specifically antisemitic measures or attitudes that you noticed at this time?<sup>68</sup>

**Alfred:** Not really. I don't think so. Unfortunately, it took them a year to get organized, but it finally came. They had, during the first year, sorted out the people. Everybody had to have an ID called a passport. There were some secret paragraph numbers in those things. If you belonged [to what] they called a bourgeois background, you had a certain number. The population deciphered those things. They knew already what it was. It was dangerous.

On the fourteenth of June 1941, there was a mass deportation of people. Again, not Jews only, but because the Jews were heavily represented in the commercial and industrial branch, and financial branches, they were the targets of these [deportations]. One night, about I'd estimate 5,000 or 6,000 people were picked up at night, had two hours to pack, taken on a truck, taken to the railroad, and two weeks later they showed up in Siberia.

**Adina:** Did you know some of these people personally?

**Alfred:** Yes. If we have more time, I will tell you more about that. What sticks in my mind was especially a fellow student of mine whose name was Selma. She was an exceptionally fine pianist. She, and her parents, and grandparents were all picked up and deported. The ostensible reason was her grandfather, who owned a small deli store or something like that, was an educated man. At one time, he was elected President of the Chamber of Commerce of the food dealers, so that was suspect. He disappeared. The rest of his family, except for his wife, did survive the war, and Selma. There's a very tragic story about it. I got a very long letter from her many years after the war.

People were conscripted.<sup>69</sup> People were involuntarily sent off to coal mines. The region where there's fighting now in the eastern Ukraine, that was the coal region. Oil [and] industrial

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<sup>67</sup> The Soviet Union's Communist regime ideologically opposed religion. Religion was never officially made illegal, but an unofficial policy of state atheism existed. The state conducted anti-religious persecutions (usually under other pretexts) against believers that were meant to hurt and destroy religion. The state confiscated property, ridiculed religion, harassed believers, and propagated atheism in the schools.

<sup>68</sup> Antisemitism is prejudice against, hostility to, or hatred of Jews.

stores were nationalized. Interestingly enough, we had our local branch of communists there from before the war. They were the unhappiest people, because this was this was a complete shock for them.

I'll try to stick on the money thing. During this year, there was only one currency. I told you before that there were prohibitions to own hard currency like dollars or pounds or gold coins. That became particularly harsh during the . . . This was cause for deportation to Siberia if they found you.

**Adina:** Were people searched? Were homes searched for these things?

**Alfred:** Yes. We knew there was a NKVD, which is KGB under different names.<sup>70</sup>

**Adina:** In your family, was there any attempt to hide valuables, whether they were currency or not, to try to maintain some . . .

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** How did you do that?

**Alfred:** It's a long story. It overlaps now because the Russians only stayed one year. One year after they arrived, Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941 [on] June 22. After about four or five weeks, the Germans conquered this area. The Romanians were their allies, so we had mixed German-Romanian people who came in there.

You asked if people hid things. Yes, I had a camera that I had gotten from my grandfather before the war. Cameras were . . . We were not supposed to have cameras. I found a nice place in the attic to hide it, but there was a search and they found the camera. I probably came very close to being shot except there was a Romanian Lieutenant there—I could speak Romanian by that time—who was a university student, a history student. He saw my books out there so we had a very long, friendly discussion. I survived, but my camera got lost. Yes, people were hiding things in all kinds of ways. They would burying things.

**Adina:** During this time, you were still learning and learning music, right?

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<sup>69</sup> During 1940 and 1941, 53,356 people from the Soviet-occupied territories of Bessarabia and Bukovina were mobilized for labor. Though the mobilization was presented as voluntary, refusal to work could result in penal punishment, and living and working conditions were generally poor.

<sup>70</sup> The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (abbreviated as NKVD) was a Soviet secret police agency. Established in 1917, the agency was originally tasked with conducting regular police work and overseeing the country's prisons and labor camps, but under party leader Joseph Stalin, the secret police again acquired vast punitive powers and remained the most powerful and feared Soviet institution throughout the Stalinist period. The NKVD was the forerunner of the KGB (an abbreviation translated in English as the Committee for State Security), the secret police force that was the main security agency for the Soviet Union from 1954 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** You played piano?

**Alfred:** By this time, I'd switched almost entirely to accordion and I was very good at it.

**Adina:** You owned an accordion?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** Was that considered a valuable?

**Alfred:** Yes, very much so.

**Adina:** When had you purchased the accordion or how had that come into your possession?

**Alfred:** I had the accordion before the war. It was a Horner.<sup>71</sup> That was a German one. It helped me a great deal during the war and after liberation. Unfortunately, it was stolen and that was probably the end of my accordion career.

**Adina:** Thinking about this transition time from Russian occupation to German occupation, what were the first things that you noticed that changed?

**Alfred:** As I told you, the arrival of the Russians caused a lot of mixed feelings and reactions. On one hand, it was a cultural shock for the people. That was a fairly Westernized area. Except the Russians from large cities like Moscow and Leningrad, were rather primitive in their . . . On the other hand, there were some things we liked about them. Their music and their songs were sort of appealing. But there was one feeling of the people there and it turned out to be wrong. Europe was up in flames. The Germans were occupying Poland, and France, and Denmark, and Norway, and so forth. There was a feeling we had some kind of a protective blanket there with the Soviets being there. As bad as it is, we started getting news as to what it was like in German-occupied Europe, so that . . .

**Adina:** How did the news travel? How did you learn about what was happening in other parts of Europe?

**Alfred:** We were allowed to have radios until the war started. Then the radios were confiscated and the whole building was blown up then with all the radios. But we were still well informed. It was frowned upon but there was no open prohibition to listen to other radios. You

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<sup>71</sup> Matthias Hohner founded the Hohner music company in Trossingen, Germany in 1857. Hohner quickly became the market leader in harmonicas and accordions and is still producing instruments today (2020).

wouldn't turn on Radio London when you were within the earshot of a Soviet employee and things like that.

**Adina:** What about newspapers? Where there any underground newspapers?

**Alfred:** There were no underground newspapers. All newspapers were government newspapers . . . There has been for years a very active tug-of-war between the Soviet government and the Zionist movements. Zionist leaders were persecuted—also from Czernowitz—and deported to Siberia. But there were also some cultural related events to combat this thing. One was along the language. A large number of Jews in Eastern and Central Europe spoke Yiddish, whereas the Zionists tried to support Hebrew. Officially, the Soviet government supported Yiddish, Yiddish schools, Yiddish newspapers and so forth. When they occupied, they shipped in papers in Yiddish. There were even German books published in Russia—of course, the things they wanted to publish. But there was an interesting thing. They had reformed the Yiddish spelling. It was quite different. The local people took that as an insult. My grandfather said, “cutting off the ears” of the language. That didn't go over very well.

The other thing—now this is outside of our subject but I will just mention it in case you are not aware of it. There was a big effort to build a Jewish autonomous region there at the border of Manchuria,<sup>72</sup> near the Pacific Ocean around the city called Birobidzhan.<sup>73</sup> There's a long story there. Suddenly there was an airport with a Yiddish name on it and there were stamps.

**Adina:** This was an effort by the Russian government?

**Alfred:** By the Soviet government, right. It failed.

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<sup>72</sup> Manchuria is a historical region of present-day northeastern China bounded by Russia (northwest, north, and east), North Korean (south), and the province of Hebei (southwest). As pogroms in Russia intensified in the early years of the twentieth century, some Eastern European Jews began to settle in the region, which was only nominally a sovereign of China. In 1931, Japanese troops drove the Chinese out. Manchuria was a land under Japanese colonial rule from 1932 to 1945. Although an ally of Germany during World War II, Japan initially supported Jewish settlers colonizing the area as it hoped to create a buffer against the Soviet Union. Various proposals to encourage Jewish settlers in the area were discussed in the late 1930s, but never officially came to fruition.

<sup>73</sup> Birobidzhan [Yiddish] is a town and the administrative center of the Jewish Autonomous Region (or Oblast). It is located on the Trans-Siberian Railway, near the China-Russia border. In 1934, the region was designated as a Jewish homeland and Yiddish became the territory's official language. Soviet leadership encouraged Jews to settle along the politically sensitive Manchurian border, hoping that a more densely populated province could be used as a buffer against Japanese imperial expansion in the region. No mass Jewish migration developed, however, and Russian and Ukrainian settlers heavily outnumber the Jews and Birobidzhan failed to become the center of Soviet Jewish life. Most of the region consists of level plain, with extensive swamps, patches of swampy forest, and grassland on fertile soils, now largely plowed up. In the north and northwest are dense forests. Winters are dry and severely cold, summers hot and moist. Many settlers were deterred by the harsh living conditions and distance from Europe. The Soviet Union also failed to seriously invest in the region. The Great Purges of 1936–1939, which destroyed the leadership of Birobidzhan and many of its cultural institutions, marked the Soviet state's dramatic turn against the project. As of the 2010 Census, Birobidzhan's population is 75,413, and the official language is Yiddish.

I tried to stick to the money thing. We are now during the war . . . When the Germans came in, there were many massacres. The beautiful temple in Czernowitz, which was one of the . . . well known architectural monuments, was burned down.<sup>74</sup> The chief rabbi, Dr. Mark, was shot.<sup>75</sup> Out of a Jewish population in the whole province of maybe 80,000 or 90,000, all but 20,000 in Czernowitz had been deported to a region east, which is part of the Ukraine—that region had come under Romanian administration after they conquered that region—and included the city of Odessa, the big port there.

I wouldn't do justice to this thing, but due to a supernatural occurrence, about 20,000 Jews in Czernowitz were at the last moment spared deportation. This effort was unusual because it was primarily the work of the Romanian mayor of the town, who intervened with the Romanian Governor, a general, and said he couldn't run the city without [the Jews]. He managed to get a committee in the capital of Romania to support him. That included the Queen Mother—Romania was a kingdom, the patriarch of the Romanian Church, former political leaders, the apostolic nuncio [Angelo Rotta],<sup>76</sup> the ambassador from the Vatican in that area who later turned out to be Pope John XXIII. We got permission to stay.

**Adina:** This was the Romanian government as an ally of Germany at this time?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** The Russians leave and the Romanians are ostensibly placed back in charge, but they are under the umbrella of Germany.

**Alfred:** That is right.

**Adina:** At this point in time, were you still living with your stepmother and her family in the same apartment?

**Alfred:** Yes, up to a point. My grandfather was fairly well off. He was an exporter of grain and was a member of the commodity exchange, the *bursa* [Romanian: stock exchange] as it

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<sup>74</sup> The Temple was the biggest of more than 70 synagogues and prayer houses in Czernowitz. Built in 1877, it was domed, Moorish Revival synagogue. It was closed in 1940 when the Soviets occupied Czernowitz. German and Romanian soldiers burned the building in July 1941. After the war, the Soviets tried blow up the destroyed temple, but the building survived. In 1959, the outer walls were used to partially reconstruct the building for use as a movie theater. The building lost its dome and retains very little of its former appearance.

<sup>75</sup> Rabbi Abraham Jakob Mark served as the head rabbi of the Czernowitz Temple from 1926 until 1941. He was among thousands of victims round up and murdered by Romanian and German troops in the first few days of their reoccupation of the city in July 1941.

<sup>76</sup> Angelo Rotta (1872-1965) was an Italian prelate of the Catholic Church. As the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest at the end of World War II, he was a major rescuer of Jews and was one of the few Papal nuncios to take direct action to save Jews.

was called there. [We] lived in a very nice house until one day a Romanian Colonel saw the house, liked the house, and we got orders to get out of it within three days. Fortunately, we found an apartment that we could rent.

**Adina:** What did you take with you when you had to leave your house?

**Alfred:** They first established a ghetto preceding the deportations. Within twenty-four hours, all Jews had to be within a certain part of the city, which was the poorest. Terribly crowded. Then the deportation started from this part. When they decided to exempt the last 20,000, after about six weeks, they dissolved the ghetto and the people were allowed to go back.

There were two classes. Some of them, their house fell within the ghetto border. That was my grandfather. Those were the fortunate ones because they had most of their possessions. The other people who had to return to their house usually found the thing had been cleaned out or things like that. This was very important for economic reasons because the people that remained there became the center of sending money—and this is an interesting thing—to the people who had been deported. Their main source was selling whatever they had, whether it was furniture, or clothing, or books, or things like that.

**Adina:** How did they . . . Did they know where folks had been deported to?

**Alfred:** Eventually they knew, yes. The communications were sparse but word of mouth . . . Let me say that . . . because this will come up when you ask what were the modes of sending money. Like in every population, in the beginning, the Romanians were worse than the Germans. During the massacres, the Germans were appalled. But there had been fairly close relations between the Romanian and Jewish population. There were many descent [people like] the mayor . . . The only way you could get money from Czernowitz to the people who were deported to various places in the Ukraine was by a courier. The courier was almost always a Romanian whom you had known from before and whom you trusted. Our experience was that these turned out to be very trustworthy persons. You sold whatever you had, you sent money to the people out there, and that saved many lives.

**Adina:** What currency was the money you got for selling possessions?

**Alfred:** In Romanian, it was *lei*, but it was also changed every few months. I mean, people didn't have much to lose out there. They still held on to harder currency, taking a risk for it.

**Adina:** Did you and your family do this? You sold possessions to help?

**Alfred:** Yes, very much so.

**Adina:** What possessions did you sell and how did you sell them? Who did you sell them to?

**Alfred:** You sold it to the local population. There was a shortage of clothing. There were some things you wouldn't think were valuable. For instance, we had an old fashion gramophone, the thing that you cranked up. That brought in a fortune because it was the only source of music making. If you had . . . medical instruments from my father, that brought in something.

**Unknown:** How was the pricing determined? How did you know what you could get for these things?

**Alfred:** If you were the seller, you tried to get as much as you could. You came back to the old bartering thing, negotiating, [like at] the bazaar in Istanbul [Turkey].<sup>77</sup>

**Unknown:** Would you go to multiple people to see what you could get?

**Alfred:** No. For instance, I had a piano we wanted to sell. We found a buyer. He came to the house and bought the piano. You agreed on some kind of a price. There wasn't a daily quotation as to what the exchange rate is. [It was] very primitive.

**Unknown:** You said most of the exchange was in the Romanian currency?

**Alfred:** Yes, but there were means of exchanging this. Now this did have a daily rate. It was dangerous to hold on to the Romanian money because you could buy something today but not next week.

**Adina:** Were there ever exchanges for some goods for other goods at this time?

**Alfred:** Yes, very much so. You used to barter. I tried to [search online] a little bit for you. I believe in the place where the people had been deported to, which was German and Romanian occupied Ukraine, they did have some special currency that the Germans had issued. They didn't want for the same reason the Americans didn't want, for instance, to have dollars after the war in the American zone of Germany.<sup>78</sup> They either continued to use the German

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<sup>77</sup> Constantinople (now known as Istanbul) was the capital city of the Roman, Byzantine, Latin, and Ottoman empires. The capital was moved to Ankara when the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, but Istanbul remains the largest city in Turkey, and constitutes its economic, cultural, and historic heart.

<sup>78</sup> Allied Military Currency (AMC) was a form of special money that was printed during the Allied occupation of Europe. These specific notes were printed at Forbes Lithographic Manufacturing Company in Boston for occupied Germany. There were different kinds of AMC for each liberated part of Europe as a form of currency control. Before this time, US soldiers overseas had usually been paid in local currencies rather than the dollar to avoid the strong dollar circulating freely in areas that had a weak economy—and hence could drive up inflation. However, the use of local currency in areas of hostile occupation depended on the local populations, who could refuse service and drive up prices for the soldiers. To avoid these problems, the allies issued this “military currency” and paid it out to their soldiers in occupied areas at a fixed rate of exchange. They would then declare AMC as the legal tender in their

currency. The Americans had a special currency. They had a name for it. They were dollars but you could only use them in American exchanges, PXs.<sup>79</sup> Of course, they weren't worth anything in the United States. That's where you would probably want an expert. These various . . . tried to isolate themselves from their currency from being spent where they didn't want to and vice versa.

**Adina:** Going back to the point where you had to leave your larger home and you were living in a smaller apartment, what was that like? Who lived in the apartment with you and how much space did you have?

**Alfred:** As a rule, apartment houses that had belonged to the local people had first been nationalized by the Soviets, except for one family house. When the Romanians took over, they took over the property that had been the Soviet property, so now they owned the houses. They had some kind of administration and you had to rent from them. The particular apartment where we lived was owned before the war by a life insurance company. They retained the ownership afterwards so this was kind of a privately owned thing. We rented that from their representative.

**Adina:** You paid for the rent in the Romanian currency?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** Did the rate seem exceptionally high or reasonable to your family at that time?

**Alfred:** Honestly, I don't know.

**Adina:** You were young. At this point, who worked in your family and what were they doing? Did they manage to keep similar jobs as what they had under Russian occupation or did things change?

**Alfred:** No. Let me take my stepmother's family. She didn't have a job during the war except she was my first English teacher, but that's a different story. She had two brothers. Both brothers got jobs under the Russians. One worked at a wholesale grain warehouse. The other one became the assistant manager of a hotel there. One of them, when the war started, was conscripted. We did hear from him once during the war—he was a prisoner of war—and then he vanished. The other one was deported to Transnistria, survived, was then conscripted by the

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occupied areas by local commanders. In the case of the German AMC, the value of the Reichsmark was kept but was now regulated by the Allied forces occupying the country.

<sup>79</sup> A post exchange (PX) is a type of retail store found on U. S. Army military installations. It is a place for military personnel and their dependents to buy food, supplies and other needed items.

Soviets after liberation, and worked in a labor camp in Belorussia or something like that.<sup>80</sup> [He] also managed to survive and spent the rest of his life in Australia, of all places. But there were no occupations. You might get something.

I don't want to take your time here, but I had a very unusual source of income. I had a cousin, a first cousin who was a dental surgeon, a dentist in a place about 40 miles from Czernowitz. It was a county seat and the entire Jewish population had been deported. At the last moment, the powers to be realized that in the whole county, there wasn't a single dentist and there were almost no doctors. They ruled that one dentist is going to remain there and two doctors, and I think one guy who was an expert in running the distillery.

The dentist was my cousin. Suddenly, he was the one dentist in the whole county. But there were no laboratories there. He had to get somebody to make the teeth. There were two laboratories in Czernowitz where I lived. An arrangement was worked out that twice a week a peasant with a horse and buggy would bring several dozen shoeboxes filled with impressions of teeth. I made arrangements with the laboratories to make the teeth.

**Adina:** What were they made out of?

**Alfred:** Gold [and] stainless steel. Even though I was about sixteen or seventeen years old, I became an expert in them. I'd buy the materials for them and I'd get a salary from my cousin.

**Adina:** You became a provider for your family?

**Alfred:** Not quite. This was also interesting. As I said, my grandfather was still well off. He didn't want any. I used a large part of my income to help my cousin, who was also Fred, who was deported, to survive the war. That was very helpful to him.

**Unknown:** Where were you able to get the materials, like the gold, from?

**Alfred:** You could get it. In fact, that was in abundance because that was something that people would sell. There were some gold refineries there.

**Adina:** At this time, how did you purchase the basic things that you needed, like food or clothing?

**Alfred:** There was sufficient food. The peasants would come several times a week to the market. There was one obstacle. After the ghetto was closed and people moved back to their

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<sup>80</sup> Belarus, officially the Republic of Belarus, formerly known by its Russian name Byelorussia or Belorussia, is a landlocked country in Eastern Europe. It is bordered by Russia to the northeast, Ukraine to the south, Poland to the west, and Lithuania and Latvia to the northwest.

houses or apartments in the city, they still had to wear a yellow star if you were Jewish. There were only certain hours in which you could walk freely on the street—something like three hours a day. In addition to this, there were regulations that somebody with a star could not access the open market until about two or three hours after it had opened. In case that a shortage developed, they would be the last ones who could buy it. It didn't have much of an effect because there was enough food there. You could buy dairy products.

There was some danger. I vividly remember my grandfather one day . . . You couldn't get any sugar. You'd buy it on the market. He bought a paper bag of, I don't know, maybe five pounds or ten pounds of sugar. He opened it up and tasted it. It was sugar. [He] brought it back home. When he emptied this at home, it turned out it was all salt. There was only a little sugar there on the top. He was very heartbroken. These were the dangers of this barter thing and purchasing and purchasing.

In Czernowitz, let me say, there was a problem that some people had spent their last penny. There was no way of getting anything. There were some self-made charitable organizations who would take care of the indigent people. It was very impressive how these people did that.

There were also very sad things because when the deportations started, for instance, there was a large mental institution in Czernowitz, which was run by the government for people of all religions. When the Germans came back out there, they kicked the Jewish patients out of it. The Jewish community had to find someplace. There were doctors still available. They were among the first group to be deported. I distinctly remember—because this temporary asylum for them was in our neighborhood—how these mental patients were deported. I always wondered what happened. After the war, I corresponded with this fellow in Israel who was deported and was an eyewitness to what happened. They were all shot, these mental patients.

I am just trying to think what would be of interest about financial things.

**Adina:** I am wondering a little bit about your education at this time. Did you pay for . . . Were there schools?

**Alfred:** No, there were no schools. Up till that time, my last year of school was the seventh grade in the Soviet schools. The Soviet school system had ten years. We have twelve here. I had finished the seventh grade. There were no schools, but after the ghetto was dissolved, first two, and then three, and then four of the boys who had attended the same school before, we

got together. We said, “Well, we can lay our hands on text books.” That was no problem. There was a lot of libraries that had been abandoned. [We said,] “Let’s study ourselves.”

We had organized a self-study thing. We did fairly well. We’d meet for four or five hours a day. The subjects we were studying was math, and physics, and chemistry, and history. Each one of us would be responsible for a subject. I was particularly interested in mathematics. By this time, I could read in several languages. I had access to some excellent libraries. Within a year and a half, I had pretty much finished the mathematics usually taught in high school.

Then word leaked out about us. There were quite a few Jewish teachers who now weren’t allowed to teach. One of them said, “Hey, why don’t you boys stop by here? I’ll check you out.” He checked us out. Then we decided that I now had money from my dental enterprise. We made arrangements to have some tutors.

Then during the last . . . We were about three years under German-Romanian occupation. I should say that, whereas our existence was very uncertain—we used to sleep with our backpack next to us—as the war advanced and things didn’t go well for the Germans on the Russian front with Stalingrad and all this, the Romanians became very disenchanted allies.<sup>81</sup> They wanted somehow to get out from it. As a corollary to that, their treatment of the Jews improved noticeably, so we felt a little bit better. The big thing is we didn’t know what’s going to happen in the last . . . and that was justified, that concern. I might tell you later.

Within the last two year, I had tutors in mathematics. I had an English tutor, a lady that had studied in England before the war. I had a very good French tutor; I had a tutor in radio technology so I could fix radios or things like that; and a Latin teacher.

During the last six months of Romanian occupation, they permitted the reopening of a Jewish school. We were allowed to take make-up exams. I successfully passed the exam for three years of high school, so I had one year left. Then unexpectedly, the Soviets broke through

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<sup>81</sup> Although Romania was Germany’s largest ally on the Eastern Front, the alliance was a result of pragmatic political decisions meant to secure territorial and political sovereignty rather than the result of ideological ambitions. At the Battle of Stalingrad, which took place in the winter of 1942-1943, the Soviets recovered 250,000 German and Romanian corpses in and around Stalingrad and total Axis losses (Germans, Romanians, Italians, and Hungarians) are estimated to have been 800,000 dead. The loss of two Romanian armies increased the unpopularity of the war in Romania and exacerbated the already strained relations between the Romanian and German militaries. By August 1944, the Soviet Army had advanced to the eastern borders of Romania. The Romanian and German armies were quickly driven back while a struggle for power took place in Romania. Romania was swiftly realigned with the Allies after a *coup* deposed Antonescu’s regime and put King Michael I in control. Although Romania was then aligned with the Allies, the Soviet army occupied most of Romania as enemy territory until a formal armistice was signed on September 12, 1944.

the German lines and advanced several hundred miles within a couple weeks. We were liberated in March 1944.

**Adina:** Before we get too much into that—we will want to talk more about that time—we want to go back a little bit to talk a little bit more. How long did the ghetto exist in Czernowitz?

**Alfred:** About six weeks.

**Adina:** That is a very short time. Was there a *Judenrat* established?<sup>82</sup>

**Alfred:** Yes. It does not fit the usual meaning that the word *Judenrat* has because it has sometimes a bad taste, especially the *Judenrate* in Poland. It was essentially a man with a council of about four or five people who were appointed by the Governor's office. The first President of the Jewish community there was a former judge. As a leftover from the Austrian thing, the Austrian regime was very different in concept of what you think about it. The Jews had full civil rights there. They had access to most government jobs, military, courts, city administrations, and so forth. There were even some people who got knighted by the Emperor. There were Barons. This changed under the Romanians, of course, but there were left overs. [Unintelligible; sounds like "Judge Plieter"] was an elderly former judge and he was our representative. Fortunately, they were not under the usual pressure that you hear [about] the *Judenrat* in Warsaw [Poland] or in Lodz [Poland], where they were asked to make selections of people.

**Adina:** They were not asked to extract extra taxes or . . .

**Alfred:** I wish I knew more about it. I remember there was some action out there that there was a big pressure to make a collection. Who pulled the strings, I don't know, but Romania had a reputation of being a fairly corrupt country. Even before the war, money could buy a lot of things. I really don't know, but this is something I wish somebody would investigate.

**Adina:** You mention that you were still able to purchase food. Was there ever any kind of a rationing system?

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<sup>82</sup> The *Judenrat* [plural: *Judenräte*] was a Council of Jewish leaders established on Germans orders in the various ghettos and Jewish communities of Nazi-occupied Europe. They were given the responsibility of implementing the Nazis' policies regarding the Jews, which included everything from the confiscation of electronics like radios and valuable assets like watches or jewelry to organizing forced labor details and groups for deportations. The *Judenrat* also administered the affairs of the ghetto and most tried to protect and support the Jews under their care. Forced to implement Nazi policy, the Jewish councils remain a controversial and delicate subject. Jewish council chairmen had to decide whether to comply or refuse to comply with German demands to, for example, list names of Jews for deportation. Some Jewish council officials advocated compliance, believing that cooperation would ensure the survival of at least a portion of the population. The members of the Jewish councils faced impossible moral dilemmas. Often forgotten in the debates over the culpability of the Jewish councils and the Jewish police are the efforts of many Jewish council members and officials in their employ to provide a variety of social, economic, and cultural services under the brutal and difficult conditions in the ghettos.

**Alfred:** There was a rationing system. Under the rationing system, you could get some bread, some cooking oils, small quantities of that thing.

**Adina:** They were simply allocated or you had to purchase those but you could only purchase a certain amount?

**Alfred:** They were both. They were allocated and you had to pay something. They were distributed by the Jewish community.

**Adina:** This was the Jewish community in liaison with the Romanian occupation government?

**Alfred:** Right.

**Unknown:** Were there restrictions on work jobs in the ghetto?

**Alfred:** Remember the main reason for at least officially allowing these 15,000 eventually people to stay there is that they had certain specialties that were required, so these people worked. They were even wearing an armband with the letters R-P-L, which means you were requisitioned to work. That gave them some privileges and maybe some extra ration cards.

Quite a few people had strange jobs. As I mentioned before, the commercial life—stores, services, and so forth—was heavily dominated by the Jewish population at that time. There were some very large department stores. This was all nationalized. They had the Romanians coming from the Kingdom of Romania who somehow took these stores over. The local name for these people were the ‘Californians,’ because they were the gold seekers. But these people had no experience of running, so it was very common that the former owner ran the store for the new Romanian owner and there was sort of a symbiosis. These people did find work. The same thing if the new owner owned, let’s say, a textile factory. He needed some of the specialists to run it, so people would get a job, but it was very haphazard.

**Unknown:** Salaries were still getting paid?

**Alfred:** Yes, if you had a job, you were still getting paid.

**Unknown:** In Romanian *lei*?

**Alfred:** All Romanian currency.

**Adina:** You had mentioned that there were times when you would trade goods for other goods or goods for services. Can you describe a transaction like that that you took part in? Do you remember anything like that?

**Alfred:** Yes, for instance, I had a couple of watches from my father—gold watches, the old things that you'd put in a side pocket. I'd trade that off. I'd get local money for it. Again, this local money was merged with my other things and a large part of it . . .

My wife is sitting here. I have to speak out loudly about one thing. I was only about 45 miles from where she was. During the time I was able to study and have tutors, she went through terrible things. If you read her book . . . This is one of the oddities of the life.

If I may just have one minute and do some bragging [about] what happened to these four boys who studied with me. One of them, Felix, became a world-class mathematician, who wound up at the Princeton Institute of Advanced Studies.<sup>83</sup> Later, [he] was for many years a professor of mathematics at the University of Illinois.<sup>84</sup> I went to his memorial service and there were about 500 students and fellow . . . [He] was a very well known guy. The second one, Herbert, became an MD. [He] was later a professor at the medical school there and eventually wound up in Israel. The third one, Emil Berger, became a physician also and was later at McGill University in Montreal as a professor of Neurosurgery.<sup>85</sup> I'm the fourth one. That's an unusual group. I'm also the only one who has been alive now for quite a few years.

**Adina:** Before we get to the end of the war, you mentioned that your ability to play the accordion helped to save you. Can you talk more about what that was like?

**Alfred:** Yes. When we were liberated, I had one more year that I needed to graduate from their high school. I enrolled in a local school. Interestingly enough . . .

**Adina:** This was now Russian controlled again?

**Alfred:** After liberation in 1944. The war was still going on. I was admitted to the school. The interesting thing is the Russians still gave some cultural autonomy to various people in languages. There were Yiddish language schools. One of my teachers—one of my favorite teachers—was a professor of mathematics, but his heart was in collecting Yiddish folklore. He became quite well known. He was a teacher in that school so I enrolled in the Yiddish school. I

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<sup>83</sup> The Institute for Advanced Study, located in Princeton, New Jersey, in the United States, is an independent postdoctoral research center for theoretical research and intellectual inquiry.

<sup>84</sup> The University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign is a public land-grant research university in Illinois in the twin cities of Champaign and Urbana. It is the flagship institution of the University of Illinois system and was founded in 1867.

<sup>85</sup> McGill University is a public research university in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. It was founded in 1821 by royal charter granted by King George IV. The university bears the name of James McGill, a Scottish merchant.

didn't speak Yiddish very well. I only learned it during the war. Suddenly I found [myself] writing essays about the Battle of Waterloo in Yiddish.<sup>86</sup>

But I was 17 years old and the Russians started to conscript people for the military at age eighteen. Then it sort of got closer, so I felt that if I stayed in school there, I'd probably be conscripted in a few weeks.

An orchestra was being organized for the local railroad. I auditioned for it. I was accepted in that orchestra. I left school, never graduated. I played in that orchestra. That orchestra started travelling around and played for mostly units that were restoring their damaged railroads. I was able to fall between the cracks. Other people did not.

**Adina:** Were you paid for being in the orchestra?

**Alfred:** No. I was glad to get a meal.

**Adina:** They would give you food as part of this?

**Alfred:** Yes.

**Adina:** What was it like? Were you all living together or stayed in hotels? Where did you stay when you were traveling around?

**Alfred:** Hotels would be an exaggeration, but we survived, let me put it his way. But we felt bad when we looked around and saw other people that were much worse off.

**Adina:** You now saw places outside of Czernowitz?

**Alfred:** Yes, that region out there.

**Adina:** You could see the contrast?

**Alfred:** Yes, Czernowitz was . . . As I've said before, they used to pride themselves of being "Little Vienna." Czernowitz has not been destroyed and has become kind of a mythical city. People from Vienna come to see what their city might have looked like because the architecture is very similar, just on a smaller scale.

Everybody tried to get out from under the Russians, people who survived. I was able to get out in an interesting way. My stepmother and her family were originally from Poland. There was an agreement between the new Polish government—which was not a Soviet government; it

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<sup>86</sup> The Battle of Waterloo, in which the British and Prussians defeated Napoleon's forces, took place in Belgium on June 18, 1815. It marked the final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte, who conquered much of Europe in the early 19th century and ended France's domination in Europe.

was a national union government with the government-in-exile in London<sup>87</sup>—and there was a population exchange.<sup>88</sup> People who were once Polish citizens or born in Poland could be resettled in Poland, and I guess Ukrainians, and so forth. My stepmother and her family qualified and they managed to get the right papers for me.

I had an uncle in New York, who had lived in New York for many years. I couldn't communicate with him from Czernowitz. Poland did have open communications at that time and an American Consulate. I was able to get there and speak to the American Consulate and get some guidance from him. By this time, I spoke English fairly well. They didn't issue American visas in Poland at that time because they had a couple of million displaced persons in the American zone that eventually had to be . . .<sup>89</sup>

I went to the American zone and talked to the Consulate there and he said . . . By this time I had gotten the affidavit from my uncle in New York.

**Adina:** You are talking about the American zone in Germany?

**Alfred:** Yes. He looked at my papers and said, "Yeah, you can get a visa but it might take two years," because there were millions of people there. So I applied to the technical university in Munich. Because I had not graduated from high school, I had to take an exam there. I was admitted. For the first time, I was a student at the university. I studied chemistry and had my first two years over there. I got a scholarship from the Bavarian government there. Then in the beginning of 1948, I came to New York.

**Adina:** Before you made it to the United States, did you have any American currency?

**Alfred:** That's very interesting. When I left Czernowitz, an uncle of mine—the father of my cousin, Fred, whom we helped, who did survive the war—was there. When I went to this tip

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<sup>87</sup> The Polish government-in-exile, formally known as the 'Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile,' was formed in the aftermath of the invasion of Poland in September of 1939 and the subsequent occupation of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union, which brought an end to the Second Polish Republic. After the invasion, the Polish government moved to France. When France fell in 1940, the government-in-exile moved to London, where it stayed for the duration of World War II. The government-in-exile exerted considerable influence in Poland through the structures of the Polish underground State, as the underground resistance organizations in Poland were known, and through its military arm, the *Armia Krajowa* (Polish: Home Army.)

<sup>88</sup> repatriation

<sup>89</sup> The 1924 Johnson-Reed Act had cut immigration quotas to admit fewer than 6,000 Polish immigrants into the United States per year. From 1939 to 1945, the quota for Polish immigrants admitted into the U.S. had increased to 15,000 per year. Immigration restrictions were still in effect at the end of the war until President Harry S. Truman issued an executive order, the "Truman Directive," on December 22, 1945. It required that existing immigration quotas be designated for displaced persons (DPs). While overall immigration into the United States did not increase, more DPs were admitted than before. About 22,950 DPs, of whom two-thirds were Jewish, entered the United States between December 22, 1945 and 1947 under provisions of the Truman Directive. The Polish quota between 1945 and 1948 was 17,000 a year. Congressional action to increase immigration quotas did not come until 1948.

to Poland, [he] gave me five single dollar bills. At one time, they were longer bills, which were no longer in circulation in the United States, but the Federal Reserve Bank would still recognize it. If you had those things, you could still use it. I had these five single dollars. This was my pocket money over the trip from the Soviet Union to Poland.

**Adina:** You were able to use those American dollars?

**Alfred:** Yes. On the train, there would be peasant selling some bread or some cheese. Of course, I couldn't pay them in dollars but there was always somebody there who would exchange it for you at probably some profit. That was very interesting.

**Unknown:** Were these a very valuable currency to hold?

**Alfred:** Yes. You can't fathom what the value of this thing was. I actually lived on this five dollars for a couple of weeks or so.

One other interesting thing—its not financial, but . . . I didn't speak polish. It didn't prevent me from marrying Tosia. In Poland, there were no maps. I had to find my way. You had to ask for [directions]. Not speaking Polish, every Pole understood German. Of course, this was my native language. But it was dangerous if I asked a Pole at that time something in German. I might get my head chopped off, the way they felt about it. I could speak now a little Russian. The Poles understood Russian. But if I asked him in Russian, he'd look around. If there was no Russian soldier out there, I'd still get my head chopped off because they hated the Russians.

My trick was I'd look for an intelligent looking person and ask him in French whether he spoke French. French was a second language for educated people there. Most of the time, they'd say, "Yes." I'd tell them who I am and then I'd ask him. They knew by now that I'm not a German, so I'd ask them, "You also understand German?" [They would say,] "Oh, yes." That always worked. They were always very friendly and not only gave me directions, but volunteered to take me to the next street or whatever it is. That worked.

**Adina:** When you were in Germany, how did you obtain the scholarship for going to university?

**Alfred:** This was after war and the beginning of the German reparation things was starting. The highest Jewish official in the Bavarian government<sup>90</sup>—that's a state in south Germany—was Dr. Aeurbach.<sup>91</sup> It was a state commission for religious, political, and racial persecutees. [He] incidentally was an uncle of the architect who built our monument, Ben Hirsch, but there were some bad family relations there.

There was a group of Jewish students—probably the first group of Jewish students in Germany after the war. We did receive some scholarships from the Bavarian government while we were there. We also got some food from the American Joint so we were able to survive. During vacation, I got a job with the U.S. Army, so that gave me access to the PX where I could buy American cigarettes. I didn't smoke, but that was a crazy world. I don't know whether that should be in your study, but that became a form of currency, American cigarettes.

**Unknown:** Whom did you sell them to?

**Alfred:** There were professional people who would deal in American cigarettes.

**Unknown:** What could you get for them?

**Alfred:** Lots of things. You'd get the local currency. For instance, I had to buy a slide rule. You couldn't get it in a store. I had gotten a care package from my uncle in New York.

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<sup>90</sup> Bavaria, officially the Free State of Bavaria, is a landlocked federal state of Germany, occupying its southeastern corner. Bavaria is the largest German state by land area. Bavaria borders Austria, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland (across Lake Constance). Bavaria's main cities are Munich, Nuremberg, and Augsburg. The Duchy of Bavaria dates back to 555. It was later incorporated into the Holy Roman Empire, became an independent kingdom, joined the Prussian-led German Empire in 1871 while retaining its title of kingdom. The Kingdom of Bavaria existed until 1918, when Bavaria became a republic. In 1946, the Free State of Bavaria reorganized itself on democratic lines after the Second World War.

<sup>91</sup> Philipp Auerbach (1906-1952) was born in Germany and later moved to Belgium, where he became head of a chemical import-export company. After the German invasion of Belgium he was arrested and sent to Gurs and was later deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. His wife and daughter managed to flee to Cuba and then the United States. In Auschwitz-Birkenau, Auerbach served as the chief chemist preparing medicines and pesticides. After liberation, he served the first chairman of the State Federation of North Rhine and Westphalia and later as the chairman of the Association of Jewish Communities in Bavaria. In 1946 he was appointed Bavarian Commissioner for Persecutees, a state commissioner of the Bavarian provincial government for religious, political and racial victims of the Nazis, becoming one of the first Jews to play a role in postwar German political life. He was among the first to work for the financial compensation of victims of Nazism. In January 1951, he became a member of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. One month later he was accused of financial misconduct and forgery in regard to reparations payments. His supporters insisted that he never personally benefited from the fraud, and that he gave all the money to the victims. On August 14, 1952, Auerbach was found guilty and sentenced to two and a half years in prison by a court of five judges, three of whom had had contacts with the Nazi party. Two days later, Auerbach committed suicide. Four years later he was posthumously cleared of all charges.

There was a can of Spry, the shortening.<sup>92</sup> I exchanged that for my slide rule. That's how I got my first slide rule.

**Unknown:** Was there a market where you could exchange things? Could you describe it?

**Alfred:** Yes. I remember after . . . I got my visa, as I said, in the beginning of 1948. I needed a suitcase, so I went to one of these open markets and got a suitcase. There was another man there who bought something else and the guy had to give him some change. He didn't have enough change. He offered him a pack of cigarettes. The guy said, "I don't smoke." If you'll excuse me, he gave him a box of contraceptives. That was the barter thing going on.

**Adina:** Did you spend any time in the American DP camp?<sup>93</sup>

**Alfred:** I did not live in a DP camp myself. But, yes, our Jewish students union grew at that time because Munich [Germany] had a lot of schools of higher education.<sup>94</sup> Eventually, by the time I left, there must have been about maybe 150 or 200 Jewish students in medical school, at the art academy, at the technical university, at the university, and there were some economists there that studied. Since very few of us had families, our life was mostly in the students union. Our German colleagues—who, practically all of them were war veterans—some of them made attempts to ask us out to the movies and things like that, but there was no contact. Things could not be bridged at that time.

**Adina:** Where was your stepmother and her family at this point?

**Alfred:** That was interesting. When I left Poland to go to the American zone, her brother had already left for Australia. She was there with her old father. Her father was stubborn that he doesn't want to travel anymore, so she had to stay with him. At that time, it was relatively easy to travel from Germany to Poland if you had the right papers. But a little bit later, the Iron

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<sup>92</sup> Spry was a brand of vegetable shortening produced by Lever Brothers starting in 1936. By the 1970s it was mostly out of production.

<sup>93</sup> A Displaced Persons (DP) camp was a temporary facility for displaced persons after World War II. Most of them were in West Germany and Austria. They mostly housed former inmates of German concentrations camps but also included refugees from all over Europe. Some of them were in the old concentration camps themselves such as Dachau and Bergen-Belsen. The UNRRA took over the administration of the camps from the military. Many of them became more or less permanent homes while the displaced persons relocated around the world or were repatriated. By 1952, only Fohrenwald DP camp was still open. It closed in 1957.

<sup>94</sup> Munich is the capital of the German state of Bavaria. It is located on the River Isar, north of the Alps. After World War II, the city was occupied by the United States.

Curtain came down.<sup>95</sup> She was on one side of the Iron Curtain and I was on the other side of the Iron Curtain. It became very difficult to communicate.

The plans were that we were going to get together again in the United States but things were getting pretty bad in Poland. There were some robberies and so forth. She had relatives in Australia. They sent her papers for her and her father. Her father died just before they left, so she went alone, wound up in Australia, lived there forty years. [She] joined us after I got my PhD and we lived in Illinois. After spending a winter in Illinois, decided it's too cold there. She went back to Melbourne [Australia]. I was there six times, visited her six times.

**Adina:** Do you still have family in Australia? Didn't your uncle . . .

**Alfred:** Yes, we do. In fact, we had some visitors a few months ago, but that's now the other generations.

**Adina:** Is there anything else that you feel we haven't touched upon in Europe and in the wartime and immediate post-wartime period?

**Unknown:** I'm curious. You brought up cigarettes as currency. Can you tell us any more about what you know about that situation?

**Alfred:** That was not only in Germany. This was throughout Europe. There were other things that were in short supply, for instance, coffee. The Germans were addicted to coffee, but there was no coffee there after the war. They would barter, the Germans who were not refugees. There were eleven million German refugees in the American zone and the Western zones of Germany, who didn't have much. But the ones who were local had lots of stuff. The story was that if you visited a peasant in the country, you may find three or four pianos in his barn that were the results of barter because the German currency really wasn't worth anything at that time. It was just a [unintelligible]. After they had a currency reform, they did very well and had quite a comeback.

**Unknown:** During your time there, where did you get most of your things? Was it through these markets that you described?

**Alfred:** There was a shortage. It was heavily regulated but it was not sufficient. For instance, you'd get maybe a hundred grams of butter per week or something like that.

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<sup>95</sup> The "Iron Curtain" is a term that referred to the non-physical, political, military, and ideological barrier dividing Europe into two separate areas from the end of World War II in 1945 until the end of the Cold War in 1991. On the east side of the Iron Curtain were the countries that were connected to or influenced by the Soviet Union, while on the west side were the countries that were allied to the United States or nominally neutral.

**Adina:** This was through your scholarship arrangement?

**Alfred:** No, this was just as a resident because I was not in a DP camp. I got care packages from my uncle. The students, there was a dining room where we got one meal per day, mostly through the American Joint.

There were some very moving things. I remember the first *Rosh Ha-Shanah* after the war.<sup>96</sup> Each student got a package. The package contained gifts from Jews throughout the world. There was a bottle of wine from [what was still] Palestine at that time,<sup>97</sup> or there was a can of kosher meat from Argentina, or a jar of orange jam from South Africa. I was very . . .

**Unknown:** Do you know who organized that?

**Alfred:** Yes, that was through the Joint.<sup>98</sup> It was very moving that these people from so far away . . .

**Unknown:** Where did you live when you were a student?

**Alfred:** I had a landlady, a seventy-five year old lady. She used to ride her bicycle to the to go out to the county and come back with a bag of potatoes.

**Adina:** You lived by yourself in her home?

**Alfred:** Yes. She always rented the room to a student. She gave me the house rules when I moved in there that I'd pay so much, and that includes coffee ersatz in the morning, and she takes care of the laundry, but I could not have lady visitors after nine o'clock.

**Adina:** What was a typical day like for you as a student?

**Alfred:** For one thing, it was almost like suddenly being overcome by fresh air. Later, I wound up myself in the academic world here. I found my registration book for courses. I had twenty-eight hours per week compared to the maximum of about fourteen that my students here would have, at least twice. We worked very assiduously in school.

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<sup>96</sup> *Rosh Ha-Shanah* [Hebrew: head of the year; i.e. New Year festival] begins the cycle of High Holy Days. It introduces the Ten Days of Penitence, when Jews examine their souls and take stock of their actions. On the tenth day is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. The tradition is that on *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, G-d sits in judgment on humanity. Then the fate of every living creature is inscribed in the Book of Life or Death. Prayer and repentance before the sealing of the books on Yom Kippur may revoke these decisions.

<sup>97</sup> 'Palestine' was the name of the area that is now Israel and Jordan. After World War I, the area came under the administration of the British and was called the "British Mandate." After World War II, the states of Israel and Trans-Jordan (now Jordan) were established.

<sup>98</sup> The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (commonly called "the Joint") is a worldwide Jewish relief organization headquartered in New York. It was established in 1914. After World War II, the Joint provided desperately needed supplies and necessities to survivors inside and outside of DP camps in Eastern Europe, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

I told you the money wasn't worth anything, but Munich was one of the cultural capitals of Germany before the war. Then since the American zone was the favored zone, a lot of their musical stars settled in Munich after the war, movie actors and . . . So you had a remarkable choice of first-class orchestras, and theatres, and museums that were rebuilt. Many of them were destroyed. But because the money wasn't worth [much], it was hard to get a ticket except through the students at the university. I did have access to some of the best performers essentially for free because the money . . . That was quite an important part of my own life.

**Unknown:** When you say money, what currency are you talking about?

**Alfred:** It was still the old *mark*, which wasn't worth anything.<sup>99</sup>

**Adina:** Did you play music anymore at that time?

**Alfred:** Not really. There was a change after my accordion was stolen. I gradually switched my tastes to classical music, which wasn't necessarily the thing you play on the accordion.

**Adina:** We are almost out of time, but I am curious about your impressions when you came to New York. What were your first impressions? How did things seem different?

**Alfred:** Let me tell you, one of the greatest impressions was Times Square at night because Europe was dark.<sup>100</sup> Suddenly you had all these lights. You were almost blinded by this thing.

The second thing was the abundance of food. I stayed the first few weeks at my uncle's house. Everything they put on the table was consumed—four bananas, five bananas, three oranges . . . That lasted about two or three weeks. I got the tour of New York the first week there, which included Coney Island<sup>101</sup> with the famous Nathan's frankfurters.<sup>102</sup> I'm not exaggerating when I say I ate about twenty of them in one standing. That ended after a while.

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<sup>99</sup> The *Reichsmark* was the currency in Germany from 1924 until 1948, when the Deutschmark in West Germany and East German mark in East Germany replaced it. It is commonly referred to as the "Deutschmark" in English and the "Mark" or "D-Mark" in German.

<sup>100</sup> Times Square is a major commercial intersection, tourist destination, entertainment center, and neighborhood in the Midtown Manhattan section of New York City, at the junction of Broadway and Seventh Avenue.

<sup>101</sup> Coney Island is a peninsular residential neighborhood, beach, and leisure/entertainment destination on the Coney Island Channel, which is in the southwestern part of the borough of Brooklyn in New York City.

<sup>102</sup> Nathan's Famous, Inc. is an American company that operates a chain of fast food restaurants specializing in hot dogs. The original Nathan's restaurant was a hot dog stand in Coney Island that opened in 1916 and bears the name of Nathan Handwerker, who opened the stand with his wife, Ida, both Polish Jewish immigrants.

I had one very serious and very unpleasant experience. In 1947, the Hillel foundation<sup>103</sup> and the B'nai B'rith<sup>104</sup> in the United States offered twenty scholarships for students who were survivors of the Holocaust for study in the United States. They asked Marie Syrkin<sup>105</sup>—a very distinguished writer, and professor later at Brandeis University,<sup>106</sup> and the daughter of the *Bund*<sup>107</sup> leader in the United States—to go to Europe and select twenty students for that scholarship.

She wrote about her experience in one of her books called *The State of The Jews* how she went about finding those students. She went about visiting the universities in Europe where you could find Jewish students, Paris, Vienna, Hamburg, Milan, Rome, and Munich. Munich was the largest, of course. There were these sort of competitive exams—she describes the difficulty in what language these exams should take place—and personal interviews. When these things were

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<sup>103</sup> Founded in 1923 and adopted by B'nai B'rith in 1924, Hillel is the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. It is the largest Jewish campus organization in the world, working with thousands of college students globally.

<sup>104</sup> B'nai B'rith International [Hebrew: Children of the Covenant] is the oldest Jewish service organization in the world. B'nai B'rith states that it is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and combating antisemitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life, to provide broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and to facilitate advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world.

<sup>105</sup> Marie Syrkin (1899-1989) was an American author, translator, educator, and Zionist activist. Born in Switzerland, she was the daughter of well-known Social Zionist activists who moved to the United States in 1908. Her father, Nachman Syrkin was a political theorist, founder of Labour Zionism, and a prolific writer in the Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, German and English languages. In the 1930s, Syrkin began publishing translations of Yiddish poetry and articles on Jewish cultural and political life, and current issues, in the *Jewish Frontier* and other publications, including the *New York Times* and the *Jerusalem Post*. Her first book was published in 1944, followed by six more over her lifetime. After the war, in 1947, she interviewed Jewish Holocaust survivors in displaced persons camps on behalf of B'nai B'rith's Hillel program to recruit candidates for scholarships to American Universities. In 1950 she became a professor of English literature at Brandeis University, teaching courses in American Jewish fiction and on the literature of the Holocaust (possibly the earliest such university course) until her retirement in 1966. In 1980, Syrkin published *The State of The Jews: An Evolving Account of the Jewish Experience Since the Holocaust*, a collection of previously published essays.

<sup>106</sup> Brandeis University is a private research university in Waltham, Massachusetts. It was founded in 1948 as a non-sectarian, coeducational institution sponsored by the Jewish community.

<sup>107</sup> Nachman Syrkin was not associated with the German-American *Bund*, an American Nazi organization established in the 1930s. Its main goal was to promote a favorable view of Nazi Germany. It was strongest before the war began in 1939 and dwindled during the war when 'favorable' views of Nazi Germany were less popular. In its heyday, the *Bund* held large rallies and operated training camps. Naturally, it was highly antisemitic. Its leader, Fritz Julius Kuhn, a German immigrant, was later convicted of embezzlement and tax evasion and sent to prison. In 1945 he was released and deported to Germany, where he died in 1951.

finished, I placed number two on the list. The guy who was number one was also in Munch, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, [named] Birkle.<sup>108</sup>

After a few months, Birkle got a notification that he was accepted at the University of Virginia,<sup>109</sup> and the papers to get a student visa, and a ship ticket, and a scholarship for four years. I was sure that I'm going to be the next one. A couple of months pass and number six got his papers, and number ten, and so forth. I never heard from them.

There was no way of communicating with Hillel headquarters in New York. We had no phone service, no airmail service. I asked an official of the Joint if he could help me with the communication, which he did. They had privileges for airmail. A few weeks later, I get a call from him. He tells me that he just got a letter from the Hillel office in New York that there was a problem with my papers.

You asked before whether I stayed at a DP camp. I did not. Most of the other students did. On this questionnaire, there was a question [about the] date of entering camp. Now, what they really asked for was dates of entering the U.S. zone in Germany but this was not phrased properly. The American government had rules you could not get a visa unless you arrived or were present in the U.S. zone before December 1945. I crossed this out. The people in New York interpreted that that I could not answer this question because I was not there in 1945, but it wasn't clear at all. They decided there was no point working on my papers because I wouldn't get a visa.

By coincidence, the day before I visited the Joint, I was notified by the American Consulate that I got my permanent immigration visa. This guy said, "Well, you're much better off because with an immigrant's visa, you can become a naturalized citizen in five years. These other guys get student visas and they officially have to leave the country unless they marry an American girl or something like that." He said, "Well, when you arrive in New York, just go to the Hillel office and straighten it out." That made sense, except that when I arrived in New York, I visited the Hillel office. The lady said, "Oh, my gosh!" My scholarship was awarded to somebody else and that was the end of their available funds. It was a problem.

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<sup>108</sup> Auschwitz-Birkenau was a network of camps built and operated by Germany just outside the Polish town of Oswiecim (renamed 'Auschwitz' by the Germans) in Polish areas annexed by Germany during World War II. It is estimated that the SS and police deported at a minimum 1.3 million people (approximately 1.1 million of which were Jews) to the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex between 1940 and 1945. Camp authorities murdered 1.1 million of these prisoners.

<sup>109</sup> The University of Virginia is a public research university in Charlottesville, Virginia. It was founded in 1819 by United States Declaration of Independence author Thomas Jefferson.

**Adina:** You had no scholarship when you arrived.

**Alfred:** No scholarship. I had forty dollars in my pocket.

**Adina:** We are out of time, but I am so interested. What did you do? How did you get into school?

**Alfred:** The first thing is I had to get a job. That was shortly after the war. All the veterans were coming back so it was difficult to get even a menial job there. I eventually got a job in some baby pants factory and plastics factory in New York.

I was accepted. I took the entrance exam and was accepted with advanced standing at City College of New York.<sup>110</sup> They had evening classes. Then I found out about a unique school in New York, which is not very well known. It's the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, which was the only private college in the United States that was tuition free.<sup>111</sup> It had been for about a hundred and fifty years. They had three schools. They had architecture, the school of engineering, and the school of art. As it turns out, [it is] a very prestigious school. They have Nobel Prize winners and the architect of the World Trade Center.

I took the entrance exam. It was very competitive. It was a three-day exam. Usually one out of thirty get accepted. I was accepted and switched from chemistry to chemical engineering. Eventually I had a fulltime job in a research laboratory. It took me three years to get my bachelors degree. It worked out.

**Adina:** Thank you. Is there anything that you feel that you did not get to talk about that you want to?

**Alfred:** I was going to find out a little more about . . . You came back to the currencies. I'm not certain what currency was used in the place where the people were deported. I can still communicate with a couple of people who were there. I was thinking about asking them.

**Unknown:** Whenever you do find them, I am sure that would be interesting. Thank you so much.

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<sup>110</sup> Founded in 1847, City College of New York was the first free public institution of higher education in the United States. It is a senior college of the City University of New York (CUNY) and is located in Manhattan.

<sup>111</sup> The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, commonly known as Cooper Union or The Cooper Union and informally referred to, especially during the 19th century, as 'the Cooper Institute,' is a private college at Cooper Square on the border of the East Village neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City. The college opened in 1859. The industrialist Peter Cooper endowed the school to educate working-class New Yorkers at no cost to them. Early in the school's history, some students who could afford to pay did so, but no undergraduates paid tuition for a century. In 2013, the college announced that financial difficulties meant it would begin to charge tuition on a sliding scale, up to 50 percent of the annual bill. Two years later, it promised to restore free tuition within ten years.

**Alfred:** You're welcome.

<End Disc 2>

**INTERVIEW ENDS**

Cuba Family Archives