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(signed) Israel Emont
(date) 12 August 1976

Understood and agreed to

(interviewer)
Interviewee: Israel Emiot
Interviewer: Dennis B. Klein
Date(s) of interview: July 6, 14 August 12, 1976 (2 tapes)
Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)

Twice Mr. Emiot and I met in his office at the Jewish Community Center. The story of his life—the inner story, his experiences, his devotion to study, the ways of the old world which clash with the modern surroundings of his office—makes an immediate and unforgettable impression: for here is a man who looks older than his age, who seems out of place with his environment, but comfortable with his books, the layers of Yiddish literature on and around his desk. Many stories characterize this interview—some a bit rambling, but generally interesting.

Background of interviewee

"Emiot" was born in Ostrow, near Warsaw, in 1909, the peak of Jewish life, at a time of Hasidic and "progressive" cross-currents. He attended Yeshiva for nine years and, at the same time, pursued a secular education. In 1939, with the invasion of German forces, he fled to near-by Russia where, for four years he continued his literary activity in relative tranquillity. He was sent to the "autonomous" Jewish Socialist Republic (Birobidjan) in 1941, there to help promote Jewish culture and found a university. This activity, interpreted by Stalin as treasonous, led him into slave labor camp (1948), from which he was finally released in 1956. After spending two years in Warsaw, he joined his family in Rochester.

Even though "Emiot" has lived in Rochester for not less than twenty years, he has observed much: the decline of Yiddish life, the importance of the JCC, and the quality of Jewish life. Many of these observations are made in contrast to Shtetl or Hasidic experiences. Thus, besides the self-contained interest of his old-world recollections, this material serves as a foil for the second-tape, his observations of the local community.

Interview index (corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassette recorder numbers)

Social history ***

Family *

Demographic/residential (does not apply to Rochester)

Economic none

Political/civic (does not apply to Rochester)

Zionism/Israel ***

Jewish community ***

Community relations (does not apply to Rochester)

Religious life (does not apply to Rochester)

Jewish education (does not apply to Rochester)

Anti-Semitism (does not apply to Rochester)

Interview log:

a) corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassette recorder nos

b) including references to others in the Rochester community

—see following page(s)—
Tape 1, Side A
July 6, 1976

I. Biographical
   A. Born in Poland, 1909
   B. Hassidic background
   C. Father, Mother
   D. Education: religious, secular
   E. Progressive influences of his father, in conflict with
      his mother who was religious (traditional)
   F. Yeshiva (9 years)
   G. Examples of Talmudic controversies
   H. Self-secular education (Heine)
   I. Identifies with Heine's Judaism

II. Reflections on German Jewry: Jewish identity

III. Flight from Hitler, left mother behind (father had emigrated);
      took wife and children

IV. Russian in the 1940's
   A. Early acceptance by Communists
   B. Jewish observance tolerated
   C. Birobidjan: 1944-1946 (Jewish Socialist Republic)
   D. Worked for Jewish anti-Fascist Newspaper, committee

V. Parachute experiences: metaphor of freedom

Tape 1, Side B

VI. Autonomy of Birobidjan
   A. Reasons for its establishment: Jewish cultural preservation
   B. Personal support of its establishment
   C. Permission granted to live in the region (Oblast)
   D. Involved in establishing a university
   E. Active in demonstrating worthiness of Jewish Jews

VII. Reaction to the establishment of the State of Israel
     involving Israel by Jews in Birobidjan
     A. Jewish support of Israel by Jews in Birobidjan
     B. The uncertainty of Jewish life in Russia with the
        rise of Stalinism
     C. 1958: Invited to Israel to lecture
     D. Reactions to Israel, Kibbutz
     E. Desire to live in Israel
     F. Differences between Israel and Birobidjan: the question
        of autonomy

VIII. Slave labor camp under Stalin
      A. Arrested for nationalist activity in Birobidjan
      B. Jewish themes in writings
      C. No conflict between Russian and Jewish patriotism
      D. Stalin
VIII. Slave labor camp under Stalin, co t.
F. Released in 1956 (family to America, k 1951)

IX. Poland: 1956-1968
A. Anti-Semitism; observations
B. Literary activity
G. Comparison with Isaac Deutscher *

X. Image of America **

Tape 2. Side A
August 12, 1976

XI. 1956-1968: revolution in Poland--"good for the Jews"
A. Well received *
B. Uncertainty of continued receptivity
C. anti-Semitism: observations-#* popular not intellectual **
D. Jewish-Catholic relations in Poland *

XII. Emigration **

XIII. Rochester
A. Yiddish life: Workmen's Circle, Verband Labor Zionism **
B. Yiddish activity: political, artistic **
C. Literary #** activity (\%\%)
D. Author-in-residence at the JCC: reflections on the position *
E. Writing for the Daily Forward (NYC) \%\% \%\%
F. Lecture activity *
G. Organization of Yiddish activity *

Tape 2, Side B

XIV. "Yiddish is sick, it will not die"

XV. Jewish life in Rochester
A. Importance of JCC, in Brighton **
B. Criticism of opulence
C. Contrast with shtetl life *
D. Lack of "color" in Jewish life; i.e. Jewish identity,
   Jewish holidays, Zionism, Jewish-secular sense of history **
E. "People not guilty for their circumstances"
F. Jewish life vs. Hasidism *
Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Israel Emiot at the Jewish Community Center on July 8, 1976. This is Tape No. 1, Side A. I'd like to begin, Mr. Emiot, with your background. If you can give us a sketch of when you were born and where, kind of us give us an updating on how you got to Rochester.

A. I was born in Poland in 1909 in a... in a very Hassidic family. My parents... my parents were different. My father was the grandchild of one of the greatest Hassidinles, the so-called "yira kodosh," the holy Jew they called him. This is a... his own sect of the Hassidic movement, also the mystical movement in Hassidim. And I am the seventh generation.

Q. Of that?

A. Of the "yira kodosh," the holy Jew. He was a great man. And my father... see his marriage was to a... a Sephardic, a rabbi's... which was all of the leaders of Hassidim in the town, Kalushin.

Q. OK. Is that near... where is that?

A. Not far from Warsaw not far from me. Poland is not a big... this can be maybe 100 miles from my town. And he was... he... just a minute... father-in-law was a great saddic, which means... saddic means not a rabbi, more than this, a leader of Hassidim.

Q. OK.

A. Not only a fearless leader of generations like Lebovitcher now. And he affected to be the same like if he's a father-in-law. You know Caballa, you know Hassidim?

Q. Right.

A. He was a sharp mind. You can see a picture here in all of my books.
Q. Oh, I see. Of your father?
A. Of my father, he was already... he was a little going to the enlightened later... he was still religious but not like he was before. But he was in Kalushim. My mother was his second wife because his first wife got sick, and mental sick, she was mental sick.
Q. Right.
A. First wife. The... the rabbi felt give him all of the outward signs... See when some... when a woman is mental sick you can get divorce without a sign of trouble. And he felt his father-in-law loved him so much that he was the first sign and divorce is done, you see?
Q. I see.
A. 'Cause she was mental.
Q. Yea.
A. And after that he was married to my. ...
Q. To your mother?
A. ... mother.
Q. You never met your father's first wife, have you?
A. No, she was... see after her mental sickness she died.
Q. Oh, she died.
A. No, he get... Zoie gets 100 rabbis sign, see, about it. And after that she died. Probably she had something in the brain. My mother was a tragedy, too. Maybe this is too intimate, no? To tell you all these things?
Q. No, it's up to you. I mean...
A. If for you it's interesting because you are a psychologist, you see? My mother has something trouble, too, the marriage. Not the kind that... she wasn't mental sick. She was divorced, too. She was young, you know, very young and very nice. A beautiful woman. Beautiful. Smart. My father when
A. (Continued) he comes to us he was already a little religious enlightened. You see? Let me say Conservative. He was not really the Conservative religious, he was reading, you see, free books. Not always the religious books. He had an open mind, though, languages. He knew the Russian language, excellent. Polish works. So that he was reading Yiddish books, Hebrew books, modern books. And he strive to give me a double education, you see, not only like my grandfather on my mother's side which was only religious. My mother was, too, only religious. There was a little conflict between them for my education. My father tried to learn me elements of the Russian classics, you see, to learn me other things. To bring me little books for children of the modern writers, you see? Children, which I was reading. And in Yiddish... I know Reisin when I was a little... Reisin or others, Osh. Other writers when I was a little child, six, seven years old. I know poetry, you see, 'cause he strive to bring me...

Q. But your mother didn't like that?
A. Right. She did no. From my mother I have to cover, you see?
Q. I see.
A. All these things that he bring. It was a little conflict between my father and mother about my education. It always was, not go... I have... I have a good memory. I have a good mind.
Q. Yea.
A. The seder, too. I knew everything all kinds learning, you see? They were thinking that I will be a... dream of my mother was to be a rabbi.
Q. Oh, I see. Was your... did your mother... was the influence of Hassidism on your mother a strong one?
A. Very strong.
Q. On your mother?
A. Yes, from my grandfather, from my grandfather from the mama's side.

Q. Right. But what about for your father? Was the influence of Hassidism strong on him as well?

A. When he come to us I told you he was not strong Hassidic.

Q. He was not?

A. Not I told you. When he comes to us he was a little already turn to the enlightened.

Q. I see.

A. Not in that he will tear with the religious things, because he was a Cabbalist, you see?

Q. OK.

A. So that he still was... sometime he go into the... run into the mitva, you know what a mitva?

Q. Yea.

A. And in learning the Zoar, you see, which is a Cabbalic book.

Q. Right.

A. And he knows a lot philosophy. He knows the Manumides, the... .

Q. Yea.

A. More in the book, you know, but hard, you see?

Q. I see.

A. He knows Talmud, all the Talmud he knows. He was a real... straight...

Q. You're saying that there was a conflict in tradition between the Cabbalist and the Hassidist? You have that conflict between the two traditions of Judaism? If your father has a strong influence...

A. Not Cabbalist... not between Cabbala and Hassidim was the conflict. The Hassidism but it wasn't a conflict it was sects.

Q. Right.
A. Really. I told you about my father was a little conflict with these progressive things. And his background, Cabbalist. See, Cabbalist and Hassidic 'cause he was the sixth generation. I am the seventh generation of the yira kodosh.

Q. Right.

A. And he was prepared to be a rabbi, I told you, in Kalushin.

Q. Right. The reason I ask these questions I'm trying to discover what the basis of the conflict was between your father and your mother within Judaism.

A. The religion... she was too... too, you see, religious. And in fact she was afraid that I grow up get free because she no like the modern books that my father was....

Q. Right.

A. ... trying to bring me.

Q. By free, free from what? And free to become what? What was... if you can give us a specific.

A. Too much, you see, free to go away from all the way of religion. She was afraid that this can bring me....

Q. The customs and the....

A. And the other things, you see? She liked that I will go well and go in the yeshiva or head.... head I was already....

Q. Right.

A. ... and go to learn.

Q. Right. But she wanted you to go to yeshiva, which you did. You did go.

A. I was, yes. Because my father, I told you, I don't told you, I will tell you. When I was nine years my father left for America. He goes to America and he was over a year away from.... get sick and died. See that I was now under the influence of my mother and my grandfather only.... only, you see? This old way, you see? My mother own way. Well, there was something by me for my
A. (Continued) father, too, which he left. Inspiration, you see? My father. And I love him very much because he loves me. I was the only son, not ... not brothers, only son. You know that my mother give me a religious education. I was going to the yeshiva, to the local yeshiva. And after then the rabbis from the yeshiva say that the yeshiva is too little for my mind and they send me to another yeshiva, Litgauer Yeshiva, and Varsha Yeshiva. Three yeshivas. My ... my teachers, I mean my rabbis, were great gahonim. You know what gahone? A gahone means a great scholars, Talmud, greatest scholars. A lot of them know the Talmud from all the 36 volumes of Talmud. Great, great people. And my local town, the rabbi of the town was Don Blodsky, he was, too. He was never looking in the Talmud when he was learning to me.

Q. Incredible.

A. No, no he knows whole thing. He told me, look you, and he was ... I was ... why I was but his gahone but was a real great gahone. Because he saw was my ... my friend, my childhood friend.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. So that he learned then I have the opportunity to go to him.

Q. Did you enjoy that?

A. Yea, yes. Yea, yea. 'Cause he's sharp-minded.

Q. Right.

A. You see, and he was a great gahone. He was not only a great gahone he was in Talmud, he was in history, he wrote about history, too.

Q. I see.

A. His way about history.

Q. Did he have kind of that ... 

A. For example, I will tell you for example. That's ... He was a discoverer, too. You know, and give Talmud Babylon, give Talmud Girashalney, everything what is
Interview with Israel Emiot

(Continued) davan, Babylonia, great yeshivas, Bobohita, and other yeshivas. He was very... he was great in the Talmud, was in Babylonia 'cause the Babylonia Talmud is more important than the Yalent Talmud.

Q. OK.

A. Of all the Babylon Talmuds, that is Talmuds I told you they have 36 volumes. And this is Zoim, Mored, Nushim, Nuzikim, Kochim, Taro. Six... .

Q. Books.

A. Not books, six different...

Q. Volumes.

A. Not volumes. In Zoim you have Brahot, Blessings, that I told you the one part about the rings, and they give other things about... the... the same as Nushim. Nushim means woman's. This is divorces and marriages and other...

Q. They cover different subjects?

A. Different subjects. A few of this is big volumes, these volumes...

Q. What's that?

A. A volume of the Talmud, see I pick it.

Q. Was that here?

A. Yes. Big... big...

Q. The big one?

A. The big...

Q. This?

A. Yea. I think this... I think this is... this is the Maimonides. This is Maimonides of Talmud.

Q. I see. Gotta open it up and have a look.

A. Here is a Talmud, too.

Q. Yea, oh yes.
A. Mishna Torah this is the...

Q. Mishna Torah.

A. He made the other like a... this is the Maimonides Talmud.

Q. I understand.

A. Six volumes.

Q. What is this one about? What does this cover?

A. This cover the... this om, all the om.

Q. Yea.

A. Yadelrecca it's called.

Q. I see. Very old.

A. Yea.

Q. 1882, the publishing date.

A. Yea, they give older. You see, is... my rabbi at Biodsky, the local rabbi at yeshiva. He send me to other yeshiva, nine years I was in yeshiva.

Q. Now, yea...

A. You see? It is he discovered something taos yashalmu. Of all the Talmud Babylon give us yashalmu, too, Jerusalem. They change discussing, discussing, discussing. No accept kodisher. Kodisher means sacrifices.

Q. I see.

A. This was... this was lost. Then in 19... I think 1909 a Galician Jew, a rabbi, said that he discovered a manuscript from the Yosalme Hachodosher, kodisher sacrifices. And he... he make it really... he publish it. He takes from here and here and here and the language of Aramaic because the Yosalme is written in Aramaic language. And he discovered that... he discovered. And my rabbi, because he was a gahon he find out through which places he took it.

Q. Right.
Q. Right.
A. And this is false. Then they pressured him to give his manuscript... give it to Vienna and see if it's... it's not made old, see?
Q. Right. A counterfeit type of thing.
A. Yes. And they was hemist... hemist in Vienna and discover that this is meusha nehebrews, mean it was making old the manuscript. That he wrote himself. Like you know the Zora self is a discussion of the Eastern, who made it. Joave Shima Mejehua or Moshe de Leon? Moshe de Leon was a lot of centuries later than Shima Mejehua, which was at a time when the Mishna. He was second years century. This was in the fifteenth century.
Q. I see. So that it wasn't the same...
A. Wasn't... yes. So they discovered that is Moshe de Leon. The Orthodox still hold that it is Shima Mejehua. See? You know the same one of my rabbis was fighting the kodishim that this is... after them all the rabbis, gahonim, was agreeing with my rabbi, Blodsky, that was really not at all.
Q. Right.
A. The same was with another safer... can you stay for the...
Q. It's OK.
A. You see, the same was with another safer. Rosh means Bene Asher, means you have a grandchild of Roshe, you hear about Roshe?
Q. Yea, the Roshe... yea.
A. Commentator... commentator... he was a grandchild of Asher. This was in the bibliography that resist safer a book which is called Sumim Rosh, fonim. Shalit and shiva, questions and answers, you know? I mean a lot books have questions and answers. He saw that one time when it was enlightening in Germany, there was a rabbi, David Klitlander, one of the top enlightening send... take him to rabbi shul from... from Amsterdam. Charl Berliner they
(Continued) call it. And they ask him to make a ... this kind of book, to integrate the nabiligrov, which means the same in which ... the same you see like. ... now it was interfered, you see? To integrate the Talmudic yevot.

Q. Right.

A. And his name was Chari Berliner, Charles from Berlin. So, and he make it. Now the rabbis, you see, was in the Philistine, oh, a discovery of the Purim Roje, we were hearing about them and now we have it. My rabbi was right now he find that in the history we have a lot of false books.

Q. Right.

A. It was make by somebody prescribing it to this person, to this person, to this person. ...

Q. Right.

A. This was the Purim Roje, you see? He wrote a book, my rabbi, assuming Roje we need smash the ... 

Q. I see.

A. He showed that this is not true.

Q. So he was ... he was important in trying to show the authenticity of the. ...

A. I was told that he was not only a great scholar in Talmud. ...

Q. Right.

A. ... but he knows a little history.

Q. Yea.

A. He has analyzed, see?

Q. And that you respected of him this. ...

A. He was very great.

Q. Let me just ask you, ... 

A. Well, we're goin' aside.

Q. No, this is important. I think this is important now. This'll lead, I think,
Q. (Continued) into an important area because you had mentioned that on the one hand you were exposed to the modern, progressive influences in Warsaw during this time, during your youth. On the other hand you had from your mother, for example, a more rigid observance of Judaism and she sent you. . .
A. All Orthodox. . .
Q. And she sent you to yeshiva.
A. My. . . my grandfather mostly.
Q. And your grandfather more than your mother, and they sent you to the yeshiva because your father had left and he'd come to America at that. . . in 1918 as you said. Now on the other hand though. . .
A. No.
Q. 1920. And on the other hand though you said that you. . . you found this Rabbi Blodsky a great, a very great person.
A. Great. See, all my. . . all my rabbis was great.
Q. So that. . .
A. All great persons, first of all. 'Cause I know them in the life, not . . .
Q. Yea.
A. Because somebody says, oh, the Orthodox are corrupted, they're. . . they're. . . it's not true. I know all the persons because the great gahonim, great gems, you see? And the Talmud, and they loved their people very much, you see? They loved their people very much. One, for example, he was not direct my rabbi. And I was talking with him because I knew a lot of Talmud, too. So that I was talking with him interviewing in Talmud, this man fast forty years because the bold have to be prayer for the world, you see?
Q. Right.
A. A great man.
Q. Now the question behind all of this for me, at any rate, as you go through
Q. (Continued) these fascinating stories is this. You... it sounded as if you were initially reluctant to go to the yeshiva. And yet once... once you got there you found it to be a fascinating experience. Is that right? Is that sound right?
A. Yes. Later I began self-education...
Q. OK.
A. ... to modern education.
Q. OK. Why did you pursue the yeshiva? Why did you pursue that line of training?
A. Yes. Why? Because this was the influence of my father, too, something. You see? Education.
Q. You have both in you then? You have in your personal...
A. Yea.
Q. ... life you have both?
A. Yea, both.
Q. The progressive and the...
A. In... and besides that some of the people which was going to yeshiva has later become doctors, and I was jealous. Why did they have education, so much education, other education? So that I begin self-education.
Q. Right.
A. And I learn languages, see?
Q. I see.
A. And after them it was an institute for languages and economics which I was finished there. Was a Dr. Winterman...
Q. It was a secular education?
A. Secular education. Yes, I was reading a lot, a lot, a lot of modern books, from the askala, the enlightening books to the modern books, you see?
Q. So you...
A. Reading every language, but I know I begin to read the books. For example, then I changed to German language. All things, you see, by you, by me. Now I'm in German. See, all Heine in German.

Q. Yea.

A. My first love was Heine, Heinrich Heine, German.

Q. Sure. He was the Jewish convert.

A. Yes, he was convert. He was converting. He was a Jew to the last time. By himself. . . by himself he could do more. . . by him converting was like taking out teeth, you see? In the mouth.

Q. Right.

A. 'Cause he doesn't believe not in German not in the other, you see?

Q. Right. Well, he's always an interesting figure to study. Especially when one brings up the problem of assimilation. One wonders how. . .

A. He. . . he was, you see, being converted. . . he was more Jew than a lot of Jews in Germany.

Q. In what way was he Jewish? He certainly didn't observe the holidays.

A. All his feelings was. . . see, by him giving a book on religion. . . religion and philosophy in Germany . . .

Q. Right.

A. You will see his Jewishness there. He was more Jewish identity, you see?

Q. How is that though? I mean he didn't. . . he didn't observe the holidays, the ritual. . . ?

A. The ritual not, no. He was. . .

Q. The Talmud, I mean, that wasn't his. . .

A. The love. . . the love of all things Jewish. For example, Juda Levy, poems about Juda Levy.

Q. Right.
Q. He wrote the poem.
A. He was with Dr. Lipman, too, you see? Which was a Jew, you see? A rabbi.
And he was with him very, very near along with others.
Q. And you identify yourself with that. . . with his Judaism, with Heine's Judaism.
A. Heine's Judaism, you see?
Q. But that's. . .
A. I love him, I love him.
Q. But the fact that he converted was not significant.
A. Not significant, 'cause he was. . . he don't believe in this. . . this Christian things.
Q. Right.
A. And by the end of his life, in '56 when he died in Paris, his last words was "Now I go back to the land of the Jew."
Q. I remember it, yea.
A. Now I return to the land of the Jew.
Q. Yea. Was he really returning do you think? Or he was always there?
A. He was always there. He identified. . . he identified. His heart was with Jews.
Q. Right.
A. Great men who. . . I find them are. . .
Q. Moses . . . Moses Moselton?
A. The grandchild, Felix.
A. Bartoldy.
Q. Yea.
A. About Bartoldy I want to tell you that I find. . . I will show you the book, in the library. This man Frishman is the critic, write a book. He brings a
A. (Continued) The letter, he find it in some archives in Germany, about his father, Abraham. You know, Abraham was the son of Moses Mendelsohn.

Q. Right.

A. And the father of Felix.

Q. OK.

A. And Felix Mendelsohn goes for concerts, he was a pianist, you know? A great composer, I still think that Mendelsohn was a great composer. Composer. He was besides them a pianist, a great pianist. And he was in London, the operas, he was not Bartoldy but Mendelsohn. And he send this to his father, and his father was ashamed. He was a snob. And he was ashamed. Why? I call you Bartoldy when I... when you get a... he was a child because his mother was not Jewish. Why you shaming me, you no call you Bartoldy, all the Mendelsohn. And Mendelsohn answered him, you see, first of all I am a Mendelsohn, you see? And my grandfather was a great... I like... I like his name, you see? Mendelsohn.

Q. So there's his...

A. I want to tell you about Felix Mendelsohn because he was a genius. He feels identity with Jews.

Q. I see. Through the name Mendelsohn.

A. Abraham was a nothing, Abraham was only the son of the great father and the father of a great son.

Q. Right.

A. And he was a zero, a zero. So that you can feel that genius, he was a real genius Heine, feels his identity.

Q. OK. Now let me ask you... 

A. Another kind of identity, not with feel... another thing... Not with feeling, you see? All these poets you can feel Jewishness.
Q. Which poetry? Heine's poetry?
A. Heine's poetry.
Q. Yea.
A. There's a lot.
Q. When you say you can feel Jewishness, though, I mean, how do you identify that? How do you know that what he is talking about . . . ?
A. 'Cause he has his topics, about the Jewish topics.
Q. OK. But, . . . but does it go beyond the topics? Is it a feeling?
A. He got feelings, too.
Q. Can you identify that? What is it that . . .
A. First of all in his history of religion in the . . . you know German?
Q. Yea.
A. The yeshitas de Leon and Josephine in Germany, German.
Q. The history of religion and philoshphy . . .
A. German. You have all things as feelings, you see? That Jewish . . . he didn't have any influence on others. He influenced both.
Q. You know, the controversy about Freud, for example, our interests.
A. Yes.
Q. I mean, he . . . he did identify himself specifically and directly with Judaism, but there are some who say that even when he talked about psychoanalysis and dreams, there was something Jewish about that, too.
A. Because this comes from the Talmud.
Q. And do you think that's true? Do you think that the interpretation of dreams is a . . .
A. Yea . . . Something taken another way by himself, because he was a great genius. You don't believe that he's a genius?
Q. I believe he's a genius.
A. Genius. You see? He has his own interpretation, his own way. No interference from the Talmud.

Q. I don't think that the interpretation of dreams, though, is a latter day Roshe commentary, though.

A. No, Roshe commentary, no.

Q. But I don't think it is a...

A. Something is influence...

Q. The influence is there.

A. Indirectly, you see, give the... No, but you see that my background is... was deep.

Q. Right.

A. Religious. Myself I was religious. You can imagine until I... when I get a shock from the Hitler... when I saw him with my own eyes, he was killing Jews. I was only a few days when Hitler occupied Poland.

Q. And you left then?

A. I left because it was near to the Russian border.

Q. Right.

A. Because they was divided Poland in two, a demarcation line, you see?

Q. Right.

A. Was not... Hitler took over Poland.

Q. Right. You didn't have to go far though?

A. I have to go not too far. About ten, seven, ten miles.

Q. But your... your mother stayed?

A. My mother don't want to go away.

Q. She did not want to go?

A. First of all, she was thinking that the Russians would go forward, they have to go forward.
Q. Right.
A. And second, the Bolsheviki, you see?
Q. She didn't like that?
A. No like it. And the other side, I seeing this, what... what... see, what G-d was doing to our nation I saw in my eyes killing Jews, you see? I get like shock, you see? And I was not afraid. And I was thinking so, by the Germans for sure I will be killed. I was not like the other Jews there that was thinking that...
Q. They weren't going away.
A. All Germans, Germans.
Q. Right.
A. When they... when they come to Poland in the old time when it was not so bad. See? I knew already who Hitler is.
Q. Right. Unprecedented thing. I mean, you knew that this was...
A. So that I was going away. I want to take my mother, she no want to go. I take only my wife and children. I go there first to Bialastock and send for them.
Q. For your wife and children?
A. For my wife and children, they was coming. My mother wouldn't move.
Q. That must have been a terrible conflict for you.
A. Yes, great.
Q. You knew what was coming and your mother did not want to leave.
A. She no want to leave. I sent for her, too, she...
Q. And she was...
A. Killed.
Q. ... killed by the... by the Germans?
A. A great tragedy.
Q. Terrible tragedy.
A. See, on the other side I come to Bialastock, it was occupied by the Russians. I saw... the first time I don't know, you see? But they have, too. You see what Solzhenitsyn is writing. I saw the friend... the friendly... they was taking me. I was a writer, you see, and they were looking professionals. The... the Communist writers had a good opinion about me because I was not involved in any putschkizm or other things, you see? I was religious, so what was the matter? So they was taking me... was a good boy, they knew me from Poland, you see? 'Cause I was printing four books in Poland already. And I have good opinions. I good poet.

Q. So you had no conflicts then with the... the new power in Russia?
A. New power... new power they don't... they don't bother me the first time.
Q. Yea.
A. 'Cause they are looking for professionals.
Q. I see.
A. If they say that this is a good poet and he comes in a religious role, it was for them funny, you see?
Q. I see.
A. Oh, he comes from a religious... .
Q. But it wasn't a threat to them? It wasn't... .
A. They... they don't ask me the first time to go away. In fact, I want to tell you that when I was listening for the underground my mother was killed, I was going absolutely... every day, there were a few... and I was going to the Beth Hamedresh to say kodosh for my mother every morning, every morning. And I was self-trained. You see? I was davading, you see? Being by them, you see? I have here... I was still davading but thinking of the conflict of what G-d was doing to them, but I was you see... it was by my like to revenge in G-d, you see?
Q. Yea.
A. But I was seeing the oldest people was killed.
Q. Right.
A. It was a near conflict, you see? Which brings me later to go to the Bureau and cause for them...
Q. What was the conflict? What was that conflict?
A. The conflict was that I step by step I stopped to pray, see?
Q. That was the conflict for you? To stop to pray?
A. To stop to pray.
Q. Well, I thought you said you had that background that would the logical thing for you to do.
A. To stop pray?
Q. That was...
A. My father was not religious but stop pray...
Q. I see.
A. I told you...
Q. This is what I'm trying to... I'm trying to...
A. And I, myself, I have religion in me, you see? I have religion... I am religious, see? Right now.
Q. Right.
A. This is not praying or not praying, I'm praying with Bach.
Q. OK. OK.
A. You understand this kind of praying? And I listen Bach, I am praying.
Q. OK. Is that a Jewish thing though? Or a religious thing?
A. A religious.
Q. Not a Jewish thing?
A. I would not say it was Jewish, you see? Religious. I am in the nature of
A. (Continued) a religious poet. Later, you see, I was not praying. Still I was religious. I was not Communist, see?

Q. Right.

A. I was not materialist.

Q. Right.

A. And I told them in my investigation.

Q. Right.

A. They investigated me, I was arrested. I told them this is ... you see, I am idealist, you see, not a... not a materialist.

Q. That's a bourgeois thing to be an idealist.

A. I am idealist. I told them that I am a Marxist, you see? I am a Marxist. They knew about it.

Q. I see.

A. They saw that I was loyal, you see, they don't touch me at the time.

Q. When was this?

A. 1939 through '48.

Q. Till 1948. Where were you living up to that point?

A. I was living in...

Q. Up until 1948.

A. Till then I was living, I told you, Birobidjan.

Q. When did you move to Birobidjan?

A. 1944.

Q. OK. Where were you living up to 1944? I mean from 1939 to 1944...

A. In Kazafstan, Asia. This is Russia.

Q. Right.

A. Kasafstan and in Russia, mostly. In Almatar.

Q. OK. These places are not familiar to me.
A. They are not familiar to you.

Q. Is this near Moscow?
A. Far from Moscow.

Q. Far. Let me... let me ask you why did you decide then to go to Birobidjan in 1944?
A. I was not decide, they send. Birobidjan. I was writing to the anti-Fascist committee, you see? About the refugees from... they was coming from Poland and other places. And they like good riddance. See, professionalism is a great role in Russia. I was connected with the anti-Fascist committee, many committees. At the Foreign Office, you see? It was a channel from the Foreign Office.

It was the beauty... minister of... Foreign Minister Tomolotov. At the time of World War he tried to win Jews in all the places because it was a war with Hitler. German of the anti-Fascist, Jewish anti-Fascist committee was the... the killing... Hitler killed... So that they... a meeting of the second vote anti-Fascist committee, national, the world. They sent for me from... from Kaazafstan to come.

Q. I see.
A. Telegram. You no can go. You no can move in Russia without an official telegram from the anti-Fascist committee. Mehoil sent for me because I was a good writer.

Q. Why couldn't you move? Because... nothing to do with...
A. Nobody can move.
Q. Nobody.
A. See? If you not get something why you go, proof of why...
Q. It wasn't an anti-Jewish thing, it was just that nobody could go.
A. Nobody can go without a special invitation. And they invite me because I was... I told you, I was in the least a good writer. I come to Moscow... I got
A. (Continued) to Moscow, you have to have an invitation. They try to send me out to coast, but then to the Jewish Economic Region Bureau in Birobidjan. No, they no leave me. Bozofsky asked for my biography, and he don't like that. I... I, first of all, not a part of it, I was not a part of it.

Q. You were not?

A. Never. I told you I told them right now that I am a Marxist. I will be loyal to you, you see? Because after Hitler you are now fighting your ally of the United States of America...

Q. Right.

A. Fighting with each other, I can be loyal to you then because it's over for me to fight with anything against Hitler. Trying with all the things... I was interviewing part of... the Hitler place... partisans, rebels, Jewish rebels. It was a boy 14 years old and he saw everything, you see, fighting against Hitler. And I wrioted about him. To tell you something I can tell you, you will not believe it. That my sport, civil sport, no say what was my civil sport.

Q. Civil sport?

A. Sport. Sport.

Q. Sport.

A. Like sport in Russia. Sport like swimming, like...

Q. Yea. What was your sport? Is that your question?

A. Yes. Question me and I will answer you.

Q. All right. What was your sport?

A. My sport?

Q. What was your sport?

A. It is so bizarre that you will not...

Q. I can't imagine what it will be.
A. Can't imagine what it will be. Bar shooting.
Q. Shooting?
A. Bar shooting.
Q. Par shooting?
A. Par. . Par shooting.
Q. I don't know what that is.
A. You know what is a parachute, parachute?
Q. Oh, parachute. Of course. That was your...?
A. This is so far from my background, see?
Q. But you did that?
A. I did it.
Q. When did you...
A. Later...
Q. That's funny.
A. Yes. Parachuting. You will not believe that this old man, this broken man,
was a parachutist. Every six, seven person in Russia is a parachutist.
Q. Why is that?
A. They like this.
Q. You liked it?
A. And I like it, too, because it's... it's far from my background, you see?
And I wanted everything to go away...
Q. To go away from...
A. To go away from them, you see?
Q. It was so radically new.
A. It was so radically new, I was the first flying in an airplane in 1940. I
was flying in an airplane, see when it was the German/Russian Luftanser from
Moscow to Berlin. So into Russia I was flying with this airplane. For other
A. (Continued) purposes I was go in for resting, you see? They send me a good place, rest place. And I want to fly. With me was a ...

Q. A new thing.

A. ... a woman, you see? Because it is a new thing, to brave something. To go ... not to go ... I can go only 500 miles, but I want to prove this. Parachuting ... I begin to parachute with a big tower, maybe fifty ... fifty ... And I begin to like, it's easy. The first time was something.

Q. I bet. You remember that first time, don't you?

A. I loved the first time. I was only already bind to the parachute, thing with a closed parachute. Later after fifty times you make it, you go to a airplane you see the airplane, you are still with the parachute closed.

Q. Right.

A. See, they push you down.

Q. Push you out.

A. 'Cause was high, a mile maybe up there.

Q. Right.

A. So one time, second time, fifty times, you make it with the closed, you open the parachute. You no ... you are bind to a parachute and you open the parachute.

Q. The cord, yea. The ...

A. When you are in the ... in the air.

Q. Right.

A. And the first time you have to be out of your mind.

Q. Boy, I'll say. You better ...

A. Yes, you have ... you have ... this is ... you have your finger on the ... this place which is open.

Q. Right.
Interview with Israel Emiot

A. Can be opened.
Q. That's what releases the ... the parachute.
A. Yea.
Q. It opens up then.
A. You can't ... you can't ... have when you up a cool thumb.
Q. Right.
A. So you have to have your mind how to fall, you see?
Q. 'Cause if you don't.
A. If you don't you go down. There are a few times I have ... you see my ... excuse me. My heart was beat ... you have to know how to fall.
Q. Yea. You have to know how to fall. Oh, yea.
A. Later I was used to me, good that I know parachuting because they send me to the partisans.
Q. To the where?
A. To the partisans. To the rebels. Not to only to talk with them when they are in Moscow, I could go to their places and see how they are living and write about it.
Q. What rebels? What...
A. The rebels, the partisans, the underground which you had in Germany.
Q. In Germany.
A. Not Germany.
Q. Against ... against ...
A. Against Hitler.
Q. Against Hitler.
A. They was in forest, you see?
Q. Right.
A. And I can be with them about two days, you see? After that they kick me out.
A. (Continued) They picked me up later with helicopter.
Q. I see.
A. A helicopter. And I can by them and see their life.
Q. Why were you connected with the rebels? Why were... why were...
A. 'Cause I like to write about them, you see?
Q. Who is they?
A. About the rebels, the anti-Fascist committee...
Q. In Russia.
A. In Russia... 
Q. Liked to write about... 
A. Liked to write about them.
Q. OK. So that...
A. To discover what they was doing.
Q. That's propaganda.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview 1)
Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Israel Emiot. This is Tape No. 1, Side B. Yea, I... I wanted to ask about why they sent you to Birobidjan.

A. Birobidjan. Because in Birobidjan they think it will be a Jewish economic region, real. We was talking to Moscow about Kalinin, the President of Russia then, he was not an anti-Semite, he was very good to Jews. And this old man believed really that all the people... he was not talking about Israel because Israel was later, '48.

Q. Yea.

A. '44 we don't know if there will be an Israel. They was thinking that Jews in Russia have to have a territory. It cannot be only a Judaism spree, you see? To be a lot of Jews, not all the Jews, because was three million Jews in... then before Hitler killed them. No some have to be at center, you see? If there are 100,000 Jews you can make a Jewish region.

Q. Wasn't that a... it sounds to me as almost a form, though, of anti-Semitism in that...

A. It was not anti-Semitism.

Q. ... in that it segregates the Jews.

A. No, no. A lot of people was then against it.

Q. Right.

A. Like Illya Aaronberg. You heard about Illya Aaronberg?

Q. Yes, I have.

A. Great Jewish writer.

Q. Yes.

A. Was a Russian writer now. He was again against it. He was thinking it was a
(Continued) ghetto.

Q. That's right.

A. Against a ghetto.

Q. A ghetto.

A. Now Kalinin, which was not an anti-Semite, was not anti-Semitic. Stalin was a great anti-Semite.

Q. Yes, of course.

A. Kalinin was thinking that all the nations as a territory, will have a territory for the Jews, too. Now I must tell you that Birobidjan itself is a very rich country, very great, very big. Twenty-six thousand kilometers. And it is rich. And in Russia it's called 'yeres kupaimay pukatsvah.'

Q. What does that mean?

A. Air... in the air itself you have uranium, you have gold...

Q. Rich in minerals.

A. Very rich in... very rich. I would like that Israel had this.

Q. I see.

A. Richness. They have forests there. They have... it is very rich in rivers.

Q. OK. But why?

A. Fish.

Q. Why a Jewish autonomous state? What was the reason for that then?

A. For them they can keep their culture, you understand?

Q. The Jews can keep the culture?

A. Their culture.

Q. That was... that was important... that was an... that was an important priority in the government of Russia?

A. I was thinking... not a priority, no. Is less interesting that the Jews will have a territory. Then by moving together they will keep more national for...
Q. But that was encouraged by the government of Russia?
A. It was encouraged, I told you, by the President. His speciality.
Q. What . . . he was interested in fostering Jewish culture?
A. Jewish culture.
Q. I see.
A. Because Kalinin I told you was a philosopher, not anti-Semite.
Q. Oh, I see. Interesting. I didn't know that.
A. A conflict between Kalinin and Stalin was agreeing with them because he didn't want to fight too much with Kalinin, you see?
Q. Right, right. And so you liked that idea. You were . . .
A. I liked the idea because in my days I liked territorialism. Territory. I think . . . I was thinking culture cannot be only in the air, you see?
Q. Right. It has to be an environment.
A. An environment, yes. The same, but I am now for Israel.
Q. You are?
A. I am for Israel.
Q. I want to ask you about that in a second. What . . . your attachment to Judaism at this point was strong, was very strong when you got to Russia. You say you were a Marxist but you were . . .
A. I was against Marxism, not a Marxist.
Q. You were against Marxism.
A. I told you.
Q. All right. All right.
A. I am an idealist, not a Marxist. You forget what I told you.
Q. Well, I have to . . .
A. I am a Marxist. I was not in Russia a Marxist and I told them openly that I no am a Marxist, an idealist.
Q. Well, I'm confused.
A. I was...
Q. I'm confused.
A. Why are you confused?
Q. Well, I just want to ask this question.
A. Yes.
Q. Were you a Marxist or were...
A. No, no. I told you not.
Q. OK.
A. Idealist.
Q. An idealist. OK.
A. The first time they don't touch me for that.
Q. What does an idealist mean though? What...what...
A. Idealist was...
Q. What were your ideals?
A. You can be a Socialist and be an idealist, not a Marxist.
Q. So you would say a Socialist is closer to your position, how you felt about
government politics? Socialism. Do you think that was...
A. Socialism more than Marxism.
Q. OK. For you.
A. For me.
Q. OK. OK.
A. Not Marxism. I was only...you see, I was only loyal to the government,
the Communist government.
Q. Loyal.
A. Loyal.
Q. Right.
A. Not more.

Q. OK. OK. You were not. . . you were certainly not a party member for example?
A. Never.

Q. Right.

A. I was a party member, never would they ask me to be a party member.

Q. They never asked you?
A. No. Never asked me to be a party member because you can't be a good citizen. . .

Q. Right.

A. . . . of Russia not being in the party. Party members or not party members.

Q. OK. So you were able then to be loyal to the government, to have ideals, to be an idealist. . .

A. An idealist, too.

Q. And also to remain attached to Judaism?
A. Judaism, too.

Q. That was these three elements of your life?
A. Yes.

Q. Were important.
A. Especially Judaism.

Q. So going out to the autonomous. . .

A. Being in autonom. . . being in the autonomic region with credentials from the Mehoils. . .

Q. Right.

A. Mehoils was. . . I told you was. . . you know who was Mehoils?

Q. I've heard the name.

A. Mehoils was really he was the director of the Jewish theatre in Moscow.

Q. OK.

A. Back then he was a great hero. . . a great. . .
Q. Yea, right . . . right.
A. Everything was have to do . . . he was the chairman of the anti-Fascist committee.
Q. Right.
A. And he was interesting to sending to . . .
Q. This . . .
A. To this area, . . .
Q. To this area.
A. Credentials. Coming to Birobidjan. I was beginning to do Jewish things.
Q. OK. How were you . . .
A. First of all interviewing all the great Jewish workers because for our own country they don't believe they will give Jewish good workers and still . . . still in the fell . . . fill . . . which I know is so in the own country.
Q. But you believe in that? You believe that the Jews should be on the soil, should work the fields, should work the soil?
A. Yes.
Q. That . . . that's being lost in America, I think. I think that Jews are . . . their . . . their ideals are professionalism and that they're not . . . the Jewish farmer is not . . .
A. There are a lot of farmers which learned their way of farming through non-Jews. Like Kochener, another great farmer. But you know the way in this called workers and they . . . the Russians called 'virashya vanyo vasheyy,' was slogan which means to grow up many things on farm in the . . . in the cold weathers. They have potatoes, tomatoes, other things. A lot. With potatoes and tomatoes the Jewish autonomous region don't need to vote, they have enough.
Q. That's part of the autonomy of the region.
A. They have a lot of them.
Q. Right.
Q. Right.
A. They have forests, a lot.
Q. Does this place still exist today? What is going on there today?
A. Not so much.
Q. Nothing today? It's not. . . it's not Jewish?
A. Not special Jews only 15,000 Jews. When I was about 50,000.
Q. Had it not been for Stalin it might have been a very . . .
A. We was thinking of bring more Jews, to bring until . . . until . . .
Q. And then Stalin came along.
A. To make a republic, you see?
Q. You were. . .
A. I arrive and I was the correspondent for the anti-Fascist committee, for the paper which called Ainiker, Unity. Was the paper.
Q. You were a victim of the Stalin and Stalin's. . .
A. Stalin, yes. The purge of Stalin, yes. Together with other writers. And I want to tell you that in the first time when they send me, Vozofsky, which was a deputy of Molotov, don't like to send me there because I am first of all . . . they know that I am religious, I am an idealist. And Illya Aaronberg, they was asking Mehoils, Pfeffer, poet. The leaders of the anti-Fascist committee try to send me.
Q. Right.
A. He no want to give his permission, Vozofsky. Later they kill Vozofsky, too. Then they send me to Malshaks, Emil Malshak, he's a poet, children poet, a translator. Poet, lives in England. Great, very good poet, good translator. And general. . . General Galkin, the chief of the police in Moscow, was his
A. (Continued) youth friend. He learns... he teach... he learns with him in school. So that this was the... the writers association didn't look, nothing can do, Aaronberg don't can do, was doing Malshak only a little letter to Galkin, the chief of the police in Moscow. This was his youth friend. He send me a letter and all the doors was open for me, interesting. Because personal friendships, see?

Q. Yea.

A. Between Malshak, Malshak was a Zionist, between me and you he was a Zionist. In his art. No, when I told him that I want to go to. . . Mehoil send a letter to Malshak, do for him everything what you can. So he send a letter to. . . and with this letter I go to the house of the chief of the police in Moscow, you know what this means? And all the doors was open. I only called him down-stairs that I have a letter from Malshak. And I go straight to Galkin. And Galkin send a letter, you see, and give me permission to go to Birobidjan.

Q. I see.

A. And everything was open.

Q. That was OK.

A. It was OK.

Q. That was good.

A. It was good. Galkin, chief of the police.

Q. That must have... you must have been a little...

A. Huh?

Q. You must have been a little scared by that. . .?

A. Yes, of course, but how can you see? Every floor was ten polices, you see, military police.

Q. You went my yourself?

A. By myself, yes. I knew that I have a letter from Malshak to Galkin.
Q. That's almost like being in a parachute without it opening or something.
A. Really I was always. . . later the door was open. Was not open by . . .
Now I want to tell you when I come to Birobidjan my first role was to go to this catalby of kohn. This means that the party is higher than the government, you see? And I had a credential to Batmusky, they arrest him later, too. They say that I was. . . I influenced . . . I influenced the gov. . . the governor to. . . the governor of the . . . of the . . . was a very good guy.
Q. Oh, I see.
A. But I make him for a Zionist, I make him promise. I. . . This was the claim against me, that I make them for Zionist, you see? For nationalism.
Q. Right.
A. This was not true.
Q. Well, you were a nationalist in the sense of Jewish autonomy, having their own territory.
A. Territory, yes.
Q. But. . .
A. And a nationalist, too.
Q. And a nationalist.
A. You see, I won't. . . I won't. . . I come to him to Batmusky and to Dubastein to make a university, a Jewish university because to finish the people will not give the people, the children to the middle schools, the Jewish middle schools, not to the Russian. Because why? Because they give no continuity. I. . . I . . . we need a university.
Q. Right.
A. He ask me I might have to cost this thing? I told him 100,000 dollars.
Q. No kidding? You mean that was OK?
A. It was OK. And for the other side I want an almanac.
Q. An almanac?
A. An almanac in Jewish.
Q. Yea.
A. And how much this have to cost? Fifty thousand dollars.
Q. Yea, brutal.
A. That's all. Everything. We need a few good writers, Jewish writers from Moscow that we invited to write about the Jewish. . .
Q. From the university?
A. How much have to cost? I need Mr. Skaganovitch, a good writer, famous writer. How much it have to cost? I told him $10,000. He have to be here and have the best, the best . . .
Q. Accomodations.
A. Yes, best things. He eat separate, auto, sleep better because he's now died, a doctor special for him. Right now the governor called the doctors in the hospital, what is his sickness? Stomach. You will be every day looking for Mr. Skaganovitch when you go be here but he will be all right.
Q. That was. . . that was fantastic.
A. The auto, see? Auto. Now, three times in the day to give him. . .
Q. Now you. . . you were involved in. . . in starting this university at. . . in. . .
A. Begin to make it, yes.
Q. You were instrumental in that?
A. Instrumental, yes. It was my. . . my sins later. . .
Q. This will be a secular university, not a yeshiva?
A. Secular. . . no, no. Secular university. Literature, and other things.
Q. That was your love. That was what you wanted to promote?
A. Yea.
Q. Not the yeshiva?
Q. Even though you went to yeshiva and your Blodsky.
A. No Vaad Blodsky had nothing. ... no Vaad not. ... not in the ... in the circumstances in Russia you can make a yeshiva.
Q. Cannot?
A. No.
Q. But you wouldn't have wanted ... ?
A. Now a little Judah Yiddish which means to learn history, Jewish history...
Q. Right. Right.
A. Bible, Bialnick our national poet. This will not be strange from them, but the children will know a little about history, Jewish history.
Q. Right.
A. About the Talmud, too.
Q. Right.
A. So a little like in Israel. They're not religious but they know about...
Q. But also the other?
A. Hmm?
Q. But also the other? The secular? That's also...
A. Secular. I was writing about great people. For example, a jurist, a juror, a Jew, Itchikson. And he discover near Himghan in the mountains a new thing, zinc. Know what is zinc?
Q. No.
A. What you... the bullets are inside zinc, know what this means?
Q. Yes, yea.
A. And this is a material which is, you see, like stone, is stone.
Q. Yes.
A. You see? And he discovered this, Itchikson. And I was writing about him,
A. (Continued) that Itchikson discovered. Now in Israel... I mean in Birobidjan they produced now zinc. The second in Russia. Second in the Russia. And this is a Jew, Itchikson. So that I begin to write about Itchikson. This was my sin, that I was underlined, that Jews are making these... I told him yes, he was making it.

Q. That was... you had to verify that?
A. This is my work, this is my work, great farmers, great discoverers, great... great heroes, 102 heroes, Jews. I was everytime connected with Movahovitch, a boy. Which has very metals in the year of Soviet, a golden star, Lenin. You see? I was doing a lot there, you see? To... to show that Jews are something because after Hitler was occupied they cried a lot of anti-Semitism. And I say this... .

Q. In Russia?
A. In Russia, yes. And I made this and I work this this. This anti-Fascist committee... .

Q. Had you felt that anti-Semitism when you were in Russia? Have you felt this?
A. I was in Birobidjan.

Q. Before that?
A. I was in Birobidjan.

Q. Before Birobidjan?
A. Before Birobidjan?

Q. In Russia.
A. In Russia not open, no.

Q. But it was there? You're sure it was?
A. I want to tell you, for example, in... in Birobidjan itself when the second one begins and the army was going to... to the Far East in the Crimea, they want to make a pogrom in Birobidjan. The invalids, the invalids, come for Jewish
A. (Continued) invalids, catch all of these boys and they each show much in the. excuse me. open the hearts that they raise the fence and say I love Jews, you see? This was Birobidjan. A lot of heroes from Birobidjan. They was fighting for the Jews in order to try.

Q. And this you were trying to promote as well? That's part of your work?
A. Promote.
Q. Right.
A. And then in '48 I get a telegram from Mehoils, what I told you.
Q. Right.
A. How the Jews react to the creating of the Israel? State of Israel? You know?
Q. Yea.
A. And the war correspondent, what was a war correspondent to do? To make it? How did they react. react? We have to do it. I was going to the factory, and I told them, friends, today was proclaimed a new Jewish state, Israel. How do you react? And the Jews there, the workers, react, with them this is a mood in Russia, to react with work. I will work 100% in honor of the Jewish state.
Q. This is what you said?
A. They say it. I was asking them.
Q. You were asking them.
A. How do you react?
Q. OK. You were trying to.
A. Very great.
Q. Right.
A. We will do two hundred percent in our work in honor of the Jewish state. And I give a telegram right now to. . . to Mehoils, Jews in Birobidjan react with giving 200% in their work in honor of the newly created Jewish state. So that
A. (Continued) is really not against Birobidjan, against Jews.

Q. They were not?

A. No. Did you hear what my prosecutor was telling me? Oh, when they bring me... when they courted me from... from this, from a German book by the Jews, Jews have two states, Israel and Birobidjan. Well, I have enough things to be prosecuted, no? A nationalist.

Q. Yea. How did you feel about the creation of the new state?

A. Great.

Q. Wasn't there a conflict though between the... the Jewish National State in Russia, Birobidjan, and...

A. No.

Q. ... Israel?

A. No.

Q. Wasn't there in fact two states?

A. I mean that. I mean that. The Jews in Birobidjan I was thinking I told you not to ever, I was thinking, maybe not right, I don't know their undermines, you see? Now Mehoils, I, the Jewish leaders was thinking it was wrong for the Jews in Birobidjan, the Jews in Russia, they want they can have their state there and keep some of culture because when they move and spread they will assimilate. Now when the Jews are seeing that Stalin was not thinking honest, you see? And with this they are going to Israel.

Q. Right. But before Stalin came on the scene, I know there wasn't much time between the founding of the state and the... and the horror of Stalin. There were, in fact, two separate cultures. I mean the beginning of the new state in Israel and the continuity of the State of Birobidjan. What were... what was the difference...?

A. I want to tell you that Birobidjan helps a lot the national feelings of the
A. (Continued) Jews now to go to Israel.

Q. What's the difference between the Jewish National State of Birobidjan and the Jewish National State of Israel?

A. I want told you that they invite me special when I came to America, they invite me to go to Israel to see the difference. I was invited with everything. They send me letter, they send me a ticket for roundtrip.

Q. When... when was this?

A. In '58 when I came, same year.

Q. OK. In Rochester.

A. They were sent the second month when I was in Rochester. They send me a letter. It is not like you go to the University send me a... the University invited me. The University and government. Great personality, you know. And I was in University, I was in Birobidjan, but...

Q. Hebrew University?

A. Hebrew University. And in the kibbutzim, you know what is kibbutz?

Q. I know about the kibbutzim, yea.

A. I was in many kibbutzim, I was invited and I was actually... Schomar Zion, Histadrut Kittubzim. And I want to tell you that in honor of the kibbutzim I was be... three days I was there, they loved me and I loved them. So that we make agreement that I come to the kibbutz. I... I was... I like this life of the kibbutz. I like this kind of life.

Q. The idea of the soil?

A. Yea, yea. When I would go to Israel I would be in a kibbutz. I would not go to a town. I don't like them. Business. Things must be all business and not business. See, I like the kibbutz. I like the kind of life that... minister can be in kibbutz, he was serving the people. And he's not a partisan. He votes for everything. They make with me agreement, four hours a day you will
A. (Continued) work and bring your own self in doing something here. You not like do this work you can write, you can write. We will print it your book.

Q. But you have to work, too?
A. You have to work, too. And I was agreeing with them. 'Cause I love work. And afraid I am afraid for work, I was working in the prison. I was a good worker and I killed myself working too much.

Q. In prison?
A. In prison.

Q. Stalinist prison?
A. Right.

Q. So, but you didn't mind working in the kibbutz?
A. No, I love it. No, my... I... no, it's too late to divorce my wife. See, my wife and I came with this idea. She told me that I am free.

Q. Because of your experiences in the camp?
A. Yes. So, I like this life. I no need money. Why I need money when I have everything? Everything I ask, figuratively. Why I need money? I like very much this life. Because it's too late to make this decision, you see. I got sick and I could not... I couldn't go to kibbutz. They sent for me, they send me letters.

Q. You mean you were going to settle in Israel?
A. I would settle, yea. I would... I couldn't... I would be not... I... My wife is too close to the children and she don't want to go away. So...

Q. How many children do you have?
A. Two.

Q. And they're here in Rochester?
A. Of course. All are married and the other...

Q. They didn't want to go to Israel?
A. They don't. Because they no have. . . they no have how to do in Israel. Kibbutz they no like, kibbutz life. Difficult life. Is nice, good, honest. I like it.

Q. Honest. That's a good word. It's honest.

A. Good life. See, they are shuls, everything. When they are sick, the benefits the best, more than America, maybe not so great as America, America better doctors, see? Same thing you have to died, you see? No, in Israel, you see, the benefits for a sick person, a worker, is great.

Q. The taxes are pretty high, too.

A. Where?

Q. In Israel.

A. This is another thing. A kibbutz man no has to pay taxes. Why do you need money? You don't need money.

Q. You need money to. . . if you don't . . .

A. If you are a businessman.

Q. Yea.

A. If you are in a town.

Q. In a city.

A. But when you are in kibbutz, you have everything, better. You eat better and everything, everyday a little meat. Why do you need the meat?

Q. Yea. What is the difference between Israel and Birobidjan? What. . . what is the difference?

A. More, first of all in Birbidjan. . . see, I told you that they don't think true with Birobidjan, only Kalinin was thinking true.

Q. That's true.

A. And Stalin has his own mind.

Q. That's true.
A. China.

Q. So you weren't really autonomous?
A. Huh?

Q. In fact, you were not really autonomous?
A. No, it was not autonomous. I was fighting for autonomy, and this was my sin to be arrested.

Q. So you wanted to be arrested?
A. Huh?

Q. You wanted to be arrested? Is that what...
A. This was my crime that I was arrested.

Q. Crime.
A. However, I was loyal. I told you, I do nothing.

Q. OK.
A. I want a little more stories.

Q. Oh, I see. But your crime was you wanted to be...
A. Nationalist.

Q. ... a nationalist. Now, I read, I think in the introduction to My Yesterdays, one of your books...
A. Everything is exactly...

Q. Well, it said that your crime was they said, the Russians said, that you were in collaboration with the CIA and the United States.

A. And this came later, you see, they had something to do. They have something to say. If I... if they say that Mehoils was a spy and they kill him, and I was not connected with Mehoils, means that I am something a spy, too. What is mean a spy? Mehoils was in the United States, and he was in the United States to work for America. For this, for really to work for Russia, to bring the Jews. This means for more friendship to... to Russia, propaganda, let
Interview with Israel Emiot

(Continued) me say.

Q. Right.

A. To open... to open the second one, this was his work. But, he was a patriot, too. You see? It was not wrong that he was in the CIA, it's not true. He was not connected with CIA, especially... .

Q. So they make it up?

A. What I need see the CIA? Money? I have enough to live. I was enough paid. I was a good professional, a good poet. I was paid from the eyes, you see? They pay for a line, for example. It begins seven dollars, seven rubles to seventy. And if I went paid till then you can understand that I was a good professional. So I don't need money, I have enough. When it...

Q. But your real crime was you wanted to be autonomous and you were part of a Jewish... ?

A. And I underlined a lot Jewishness in my writing. Isaacson, for example.

Q. I see.

A. Why do you... why do you know underline Russian... . Russian, too. I was a Russian, too. If he was great...

Q. In your mind there's no conflict between being a Russian and being a Jew?

A. No.

Q. Stalin's mind there is that conflict?

A. Yea. It was a crazy times, Stalin times. He was a... a sick person.

Q. That's frightening. Very frightening.

A. Frightening.

Q. Here you were running away from Hitler and working against Fascism and totalitarianism, and then you had to deal with Stalin.

A. Yes.

Q. It was a repeated nightmare.
A. Later.
Q. Yes, for you. The nightmare of Hitler was repeated for you.
A. By Stalin.
Q. By Stalin.
A. '48.
Q. '48.
A. Until '48 was not a . . .
Q. In fact the Russians, including Stalin, were in alliance with the United States against Hitler and then Stalin becomes this type of person.
A. Yes, he became. You can see, he was a paranoid. Paranoic and sick, too. And an anti-Semite, too. His anti-Semitism was discovered later. The first time he was afraid.
Q. I see. But there was a tradition of anti-Semitism in Russia before Stalin? There was an undercurrent of anti-Semitism.
A. There was anti-Semitism, yes. All times. No, it was traditions for not anti-Semitism. For democratic. . . I know it was in the government, German Jew.
Q. He was a Jew?
A. Yea, Kalinin. He was the second understudy. Later he opens more and more, you see, his real face.
Q. Of course, to this day Russia has this anti-Semitism. There's a sign outside here that says, there's a big sign about Soviet Jewry, "Save Soviet Jewry." A big sign, it's right outside this building.
A. Yes. There is because we have to save it. There's still anti-Semitism. . .
Q. It's still there. It hasn't changed much since 19. . .
A. A little, yes. Not much. The fact that you know what is in Russia, the fact that's a little better because before was like a Chinese, you will see nothing.
A. (Continued) And now the underground are working to send information. The fact that you can send information, not being killed, is something more.

Q. That's a change.
A. Change. This is a change.
Q. That's true.
A. I have to say the truth, I don't want to over because I was suffering. Now you understand?
Q. I understand. So I would consider Siberia to be a place to suffer? That's suffering.
A. Yes. But Birobidjan is not Siberia. Birobidjan is.
Q. That's... but I'm saying that...
A. Birobidjan is near Vladivostock.
Q. But you were saying that there was... there was suffering for you and that did come between 1948 and I think you were released in 1956?
A. '56.
Q. Was it at that point that you were thinking of coming to America? You have family here in America.
A. Yea, I have family. My... my family comes here.
Q. When did your family come?
A. And I was arrested my family was in Germany, they go away from Russia. They go to Poland, from Poland to Germany, from Germany to America.
Q. What? When was this?
A. It was... they come seven years before me.
Q. I see. So that would be in 1951.
A. Yea.
Q. And they were resettled in Rochester?
A. Rochester because they freed... HIAS freed the Jews.
Q. Right. Right. New country. So when in... so when in 1956 came up and you were released by the...

A. I go to Poland. They send me to Poland. And I came to Poland when it was a little better. There was a revolutionary movement. And I come to Poland was they... like, first of all, people was suffering 'cause of Stalin. And they give me good conditions. First of all, they treat me. I was very sick. In Poland they treat me very good, and I know feel to much anti-Semitism there because of the revolution. The new was not anti-Semite like fellows later, too.

Q. Right.

A. They do it for the press of Russia.

Q. Right. I know that anti-Semitism in Poland was extreme.

A. Oh, great anti-Semitism. And years later...

Q. Did you feel some of that anti-Semitism before...

A. When I was...

Q. ... before Hitler? Before...

A. Yes, I feel it, yes. When I came back in '56 they was good to me. First of all, I was famous as a writer, you see? And I was a member of the Pen Club, best writers write translated me. Like Antonio Slalinsky. You know Antonio Slalinsky?

Q. The name I know, but I don't know...


Q. Yea. Oh, yea, right.

A. He died. He translated poetry. Helped me when I was...

Q. This is in Warsaw? So you went back home?

A. Yea.

Q. How did that feel? You really weren't back home?

A. I saw a lot of disturbance. I feel there it was brutal for Jews.
Q. When...you were in Poland for two years then?
A. Two years.
Q. And then you decided you needed...
A. Not I decided, no can go before.
Q. Could go.
A. Later they were...write up in the United Nations to leave people to the families.
Q. Oh, I see. You wanted to get back with your family?
A. Yes.
Q. So that's when you came over?
A. Yes.
Q. They certainly weren't...
A. Direct...
Q. They weren't gonna leave the United States? Your family wasn't about to leave the United States?
A. No.
Q. Once they were here they were settled?
A. What? To go to Poland? Never. I was only contemporary in Poland.
Q. Have you read Isaac Deutcher's material on...
A. Yes.
Q. One...one essay series...series of essays on Jewish Jew. Do you know this particular essay by him?
A. I don't remember now.
Q. It seems to me that...
A. I have a friend which was with him connected. I have a friend that was in the concentration camp one or two years.
Q. And he...what...
A. He's now in Israel.
Q. I see.
A. He was actually in the . . .
Q. Did he know Deutcher? I mean is this. . .?
A. He was with him connected because he was in the . . . he was with Deutcher because was in the Comintern, you see? Joseph Berger is his name. He was in the beginning. . . he was in Israel. He created there the Communist Party, MOPS it is called. Later they call him to Moscow. He was connected with Stalin. He called Stalin . . . he was a great person.
Q. He started the Communist Party in Israel?
A. Israel, yes.
Q. And he was connected with Stalin?
A. Yes. He was connected with Stalin. I was with him in the prison on and off. I ask him there. He was 22 years in prison, 1930. . .
Q. And that's how he was connected with Stalin, sure, of course.
A. And later he arrest him. And the sentence he was sentenced to death and by a miracle he was not killed. Now in Israel he is very, very religious. I saw him a lot of times when I was in Israel, when I was called. And he was . . .
I saw him. Later I come to America. Brought books in English, too. And Hebrew, too. Now is very religious.
Q. Sounds to me that as you go through your story that my acquaintance with Isaac Deutcher's work, there's some similarities there in your . . .
A. Isaac Deutcher was a Trotskyist like Trotsky.
Q. I didn't know that Deutcher was a Trotskyite; I didn't know that.
A. Yea. Trotsky.
Q. Well, that would be different from you then.
A. Yea. Now, I was religious.
Q. You were religious.
A. I come to that, you see?
Q. So when you got to... Before we talk about Rochester then, you've had some images of America before in that your father went to America in the...
A. Father went to America, yes.
Q. And you certainly had feelings about...
A. Good feelings about America, yes.
Q. You had good feelings about America?
A. Yes.
Q. All the way...
A. Even now I have good feelings about America. Now looking at all the mistakes they make, Watergate and other things. This I know, politicians I know is... in any country you have it, a Watergate, you see? You have it in any country. More... more good people, bad people.
Q. So that...
A. Please, this don't bother me. This don't make me not to believe in America, in the Constitution. This is a very good Constitution. It is amazing. The people out of America don't know the power of the Constitution.
Q. In what way?
A. In the... in good way. See, they don't know. Not all of them know.
Q. What is its power?
A. The power of the Constitution. The Constitution is a great power, you see? A great power. They look Nixon, Nixon, Nixon. Nixon is nothing in compared with the Constitution. You see, Constitution can take away Nixon.
Q. And... and it did.
A. It did. This cannot be in Russia, never. They have a Constitution which is living good things, not in the world.
Q. Where it exists in this country the law...
A. The law is law. It is something. It can be wrong sometimes, still it's a good country.
Q. So you've always had that feeling about America?
A. Yea.
Q. And it became stronger when your father came over here, I'm sure?
A. Yea.
Q. Did you...
A. It was as a child.
Q. Did you have any... he was going to send for... for you and your...?
A. He would only he died only a half year he was here.
Q. But his intention...
A. Was to come and bring the family.
Q. And you would have been happy to have gone?

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview 1)
Q. This is Dennis Klein. We're talking with Israel Emiot on August 12, 1976 at the Jewish Community Center. And Mr. Emiot we talked the last time about what happened in. . .

A. My background. . .

Q. Your background in Poland, in Russia, which I found fascinating. I heard the tape and it came out very, very good as you know. This time we're gonna go across the Atlantic Ocean and venture into the United States. And I thought we would begin by giving us a background of that. How you came to America and when. And finally to Rochester. And if you will tell us then how you became affiliated with the Jewish Community Center here in Brighton. So. . .

A. First of all, I want to tell you that changing Russia, coming to Poland, I was coming in a good time when it was the revolution against the old regime. Belmucka make then the revolution. And it did not a good time because again he. . . he self was in the prison four years by the Stalin regime.

Q. Yea.

A. And after that when he comes to power, was the revolution he makes.

Q. Right.

A. Same revolution was in Hungary, too, you know?

Q. Right. OK.

A. You see? So that this was, as you would say in Yiddish, "Gidfayidin." It was good for the Jews, too, not only for them, for Jews too. And became free, I feel me free. All the papers was free, you see? You no have to everytime to underline Marxism. You can say what you want, see? The Times. . . the Times from New York was in the library. And the Life Magazine was in the library.
A. (Continued) They permit it. No. ... now was Jewish ... it was a Jewish committee for Jewish/Yiddish ... Yiddish things. So they was working not bad. I was say ... like I would say like in America, free enough. Remember was everyday in the paper it was four times, four, five times a day in Yiddish a paper. Never a day was something news from the world. Not only from there like they used to make, but from the world, Jews in the world. Between them and Israel, too, what has happened in Israel.

Q. Right.
A. And inside was, too, affairs and events was about Jewishness and Jewish history, Jewish literature. I self give articles translated from Hebrew. Agenor, you know the Nobel Prize winner?

Q. Agenor?
A. Agnon.
Q. Agnon, the writer?
A. The writer.
Q. The writer, yes.
A. The Nobel Prize winner in Hebrew?
Q. Yes.
A. I translated him the first.
Q. Oh.
A. Into Yiddish.
Q. Oh.
A. In the paper, it was printed in the paper. And it never would be this. And I printed this. Interesting that he was writing to me letters that he's happy in the translation.

Q. He was happy?
A. Agnon, yes he was happy because I know Hebrew. So he was happy in the
A. (Continued) translate. So I come in a good time. I was affiliated with
the . . . I am a member of the Pancra Zoat in Poland. I was a member in the
international organization.

Q. Right.

A. So I kept. . . I can make friends very shortly. And the best poets in Poland
begin to translate me into Polish.

Q. Right.

A. In Polish. And because I was a victim of Stalin, you see? So they was special
good to me. And I have a . . . the best conditions. They give me apartment,
which cost me very nothing.

Q. Where? Where was this?

A. Poland, I told you before.

Q. Yes, this is before . . .

A. After Russia, Poland.

Q. Right.

A. Poland, you see? 'Cause I was affiliated with the great writers like Slalinsky,
he dies not long ago. The greatest poet. Yezivizofsky, which was a close
friend of mine. They later they want to publish a book of my translations.
But because I go to America I get on the black list. After all, this was a
little later they came out stronger, you see?

Q. Right.

A. So is . . . was not . . . I want to tell you that in two years that I was in
Poland was I feel me good. I mean you can make something like you don't can
make in Russia.

Q. Right.

A. I was publishing poetry. And my . . . all that I like, you see? Articles
about writers. Some of them are in this book I publish here. And it was
A. (Continued) Objetive, without, you see, without special... I would say the special leftist thing, social... socialized values, socialistic values I don't like. Objective, you see? You can write the same article here in America. This is some of the... lot of them are here, too. My translations from the Polish literature. They were translating me into Polish, and I was translating their poetry from Polish to the... the best poets into Yiddish.

Q. Yiddish. Right.

A. So it was a good time I would say. Still I want to go out because I was... I was not sure that all the times this... this only was the only one.

Q. In other words it was a good time but you weren't sure it was gonna stay that way?

A. Stay this way because I was looking in them like animal because I knew that Poland is under the pressure of Russia. And she no can be independent completely if she want. However, the intelligentsia in Poland is very good.

Q. Very...?

A. Much courage, great courage. All the time they was... the intelligentsia was not anti-Semitic like the people self.

Q. Yea.

A. No, never. In every history of the Jew... of the Polish literature...

Q. I know that...

A. I mean time... time for German occupation a lot of Polish writers was saving the Jews, too.

Q. That's interesting because Poland has always been a...

A. This... this is the church. You know, in time from the occupation of Germany as the... the church was working against Hitler, so they was saving a lot of Jews, too. For a price converting, you understand what converting?

Q. Right.
A. Save 100,000 Jews. So the price was converting, but you no can say about the Polish writers. Polish writers was freethinking all the time. Freethink. Some of them was ... for example, my friend Yezivizofsky was a Catholic, now a more liberal Catholic. You understand?

Q. Right. I understand.

A. So he was a religious liberal, you know? He was ... we was very close friends. He was writing to me, later I was saving his sister which had to ... and I send him money. Pill special, because here they have something for tuberculosis, they don't exist more. And he was very ... he know that I am universal not. ...

Q. Parochial.

A. Ah, yes.

Q. Yea.

A. And I send him this. From my first I must tell you, my first earn that I earn writing in the Forward, to get a little money. If my wife know this she would I don't know what. I send him ... see in the medicines you can send in the airplane, you see? You no pay too much money.

Q. Right.

A. How much that cost, and I was sending him six, seven bottles of ... of medicine for tuberculosis. She was treated. You know that he don't dare. ... I don't know if I have any letters of his. I knew that you are. ... I don't know what you are, so I would never believe it. And I told him why you don't believe? Because you think that because I am a Jew? He tell ... he tell ... I have another experience with a woman, too. This is not for the ...

Q. No, well that's interesting that you had this kind of interest in the contact.

A. Contact her by me upstairs I was living a woman with four children. One time
A. (Continued) she was working in the pre-labors or town. . . she was working and he was working another place. One time she have to go in the morning to work, she forget and leave the ground, you see, open so that all the water was going down. She was living on the fourth floor. All the floors became . . . and by here the floor became like a bridge, you see? It was special floors, like. . . became like a bridge. One time when I came from work I was appearing in the television and radio and other places with my poetry, with my writing. And I came home about four o'clock. I had a good . . . a good apartment. And I came home. I hear a yelling, you see, from all the open the doors. And all is going to here, you see? Where is she? We have to kick her out and this. And the husband ain't here, you see? Well, she make so much trouble, you see, she open. . . you can see, can be more careful not to close the john, see? It was apartment, you see, upstairs by here, like a bridge, you see? When the floor became so rot because is wood.

Q. Right.
A. Became so. . . so what I was doing have a few customs, you see? That I get from America, you see? They send in America already, you see? And after the Polish black market costs a lot of money. I told the husband, you see? I give you this back, make for the money and fix. . . fix your. . . your floor. And the other people I told them. One was a doctor, he was a converted Jew, doctor. Another was an engineer, and I go in and I told him, this can happen with everybody. What do you want ruin this poor woman which. . . which, you see, she has four children. She has work in the pre-labors, you see? And you know labor is?

Q. I think so.
A. Is like our autos. See?
Q. Yea, right.
A. What do you want from her? And, you see, your mother kneels to my... to me. She kneels, like to G-d.

Q. Right.

A. (Note: Says Polish phrase.) Jesus shows you up. To do this, Jesus appears again. So that I am Jesus. So is in the fantasy in the people from Poland that a Jew cannot do anything. You understand? This is the Catholic Church from generations and generations, you see, was very dark.

Q. OK.

A. This is what I want... this is not interesting for the minutes... .

Q. What is interesting, I think, is that...

A. These are my good things...

Q. ...the atmosphere is... is such that anti-Semitism may even exist today. That is, even when... even after the second war and after...

A. Yes.

Q. ...the fall of the...

A. It did. By the people and not by the intelligentsia. I told you the intelligentsia...

Q. Not with the intelligentsia but...

A. ... The intelligentsia is not poisoned with that.

Q. But you mentioned before that you weren't sure of Poland, and one reason perhaps was that...

A. I was not sure of Poland first of all because everybody which is under the Catholic satellite by Russia cannot be independent before, later it will be dependent.

Q. Yea.

A. First of all. Secondly, because the anti-Semitism in the Polish people is not like in Russia. In Russia is more in the... in the...
Q. The government.
A. ... the government, yea.
Q. Yea.
A. The people itself is not really anti-Semitic.
Q. They're indifferent to it.
A. Indifferent. They want to leave. Which makes mixed marriage a lot, mixed marriage in Russia.
Q. Right.
A. Not at all like in Poland.
Q. Right.
A. Mixed marriage, why, because they know no difference. People are born not for revolution. They don't know, you see?
Q. That's right.
A. The only... the only they did, the government make it because they need it for other reasons, not because they need the anti-Semitism, they knew that anti-Semitism is a boomerang. You know what is a boomerang?
Q. No.
A. It can go back, too, to them, too. 'Cause anti-Semitism is... is against Marxism really. It's against... it's against social this...
Q. That's right.
A. Socialist cannot be... but they need it for politics. They need it now for their... their willing to occupy, you see, all the... tend to take it out more... not to occupy... take it out from the influence of America. What will left to them richness? Now the territory they have to much of it, Russia is three times bigger than America. I mean in the territory.
Q. Right.
A. Very big. They don't need the territory. They don't need it for capitalist.
A. (Continued)  Now the thing is they need the richness and the influence, the influence. They are still afraid for two things, for China from the one side.

Q. Right.

A. You see? And for America on the other side.

Q. Right.

So you're saying that they use anti-Semitism as a political device?

A. Device, yes for the . . . yes, fine. Of all of us coming here to Poland, I . . . they was watching for me, see?

Q. Right.

A. I am upstairs, I told you on the fourth floor, I have a neighbor. Another neighbor was living on the third floor. She was an officer in the Polish Army. I hear which was living . . . which was the Koshkushka Army. You know the Koshkushka Army?

Q. No, I don't.

A. Poland . . .

Q. Yea.

A. In time from the Second World War was built by the Russian Army part Polish Legionnaires in the name of Koshkushka was hero. You know Koshkushka plays a role in the America Revolution, too.

Q. Oh.

A. But, with Washington.

Q. Yea.

A. You know Koshkushka. So this name was a lot of things in Poland, Koshkushka. Was an army of Koshkushka. And she was a lieutenant in this army. And they give her . . . because they gave her, because she had medals and all, they gave her a room in this house. This house was special for the people which
A. (Continued) are honored or for people which are suffering for Stalin, like I, they give rooms there. She was living on the third floor, fourth floor I told you was living this pre-labor woman. And she was a nice girl with own brave because otherwise was shut out for the time. Bullet. And with a child was first... And the time for World War she... she was... she met this Ukranian painter. And after him she don't like him, she no want to go to Ukraine with him. She want to live in Poland, it's my Poland which I was fighting. She no want to go. So the embassy, the Russian Embassy, sent everytime secretary to propaganda to go back to... to Ukraine, to Russia. And she was with me very friendly because she knows that I am a writer, so that she was very friendly. One time she told me, you know, secretary was asking about you and we check... we check, run away 'cause they are looking for you. Secretary was interesting that I am doing, you see? Spying, you see? That's all. He was talking with her about her boyfriend, to go back with her boyfriend, so for own way you see you have to know what I am doing?

Q. Yea.

A. What I am doing. He was spying, it's not good she told me that they are spying. So that I was coming to American Embassy and I told them, you wanted me... he was a Pole... a Polish guy. This was an American, not Polish, from Chicago.

Q. Right.

A. A lot of Polish people in Chicago. And I told him, listen, do you want that I will go to America?

Q. At that point you wanted to... that's what... that's what...

A. Wait a second. I told him, do you... do you want I will go to America? Make me right not an affidavit or something, a visa, not a wait for months and months, you see? Because they are looking for me, you understand? Not only
A. (Continued) this, all things together. But not this, this was a move to
go to the embassy, you see?

Q. Right.

A. American Embassy.

Q. I understand.

A. So they make it biographical. I have to wait for the Polish passport before
I can get American visa. They know everything. And I come to him and I tell
him, I show him papers. I was sitting in the prisons. This whole thing we
know everything, everything. From us you are sitting, how long you are sitting
and so you will go to America. We will look over. I have something with the
right eye, which was in the prison, and the... the expert was a Polish doctor,
begin to see a needle this... I see something is wrong with the eye. And
they look away, you understand?

Q. Yea.

A. It was only something when I was working, something iron goes inside. No is
not... is not... is not infective. So that they... they are looking
away for other things, you see? They give me this. This, of course, I was
not sure but will continue the same thing. So when I come here, you see, to
America there is interesting... when I come to see HIAS they give me third... third
class ship, old ship, ship is old by thirty years. Eleven days I was
going from French port to America. And I was down, down, you see. So in the
ship, you see, you get the sickness.

Q. Ah. I would imagine, terrible.

A. It was brushes, you see, and went up to him and I was sick really. And I
couldn't go to the doctor. The doctor was the captain, a Greek, was a Greek
ship. Greek line I think. I go to him, he was a poet, a great poet, which
translated three of mine into Greek. And I am the translator for Greek into
A. (Continued) Yiddish.

Q. Yea.

A. You see, from German?

Q. Yea. That's funny, yea.

A. I told him I am the translator for his... My G-d, all of my G-d. I say my G-d, my G-d, great human being. I would not say my G-d, he is my G-d, too. He... he Chekov is my G-d, too.


A. Chekov is my G-d, too. Here you have him here. Three volumes, here, here.

Q. Here, here, yea. Yea, I see on your desk.

A. My desk.

Q. By whom?

A. Chekov.

Q. Chekov. Yea.

A. All of my favorites is Chekov. I like his short writing.

Q. Yea.

A. My own thing... so, we begin to talk each other and we like the same poems. I recite him something and he recite me, and he told me brother you will not go on the ship third class, from now on this son of a gun has a lot of rooms empty in the first class and you move from now on you will be in the first class. You will live with me. Together in my room you will live, not in the general. You will come to me in my... when I will eat I will call you.

Q. That's nice.

A. Live like me. You are a poet and I am a poet, fine, we are brothers. So...

Q. That's good.

A. It is seldom that I have something I benefit from my writing.

Q. Right. Yea, something.
A. Something.
Q. Something, yea.
A. There I... there I was in the first class, you know?
Q. Yea.
A. Beautiful, nice, you see? He was coming here at the time I was coming. And he saved me from the sickness, he give me something.
Q. A prescription?
A. Yea, a good prescription and everything, a blanket for me, and a special diet, what to eat, you see? So he was coming here when I come here. My wife and children were here already, see?
Q. Oh, I see. They left before you.
A. Before me. Yea. And I find here a Jewish life then, not like now, a Jewish life. Yiddish life, you see? Was a Yiddish school, a Yiddish school.
Q. Where was this?
A. Still was it...
Q. Where?
A. In Rochester.
Q. Did you come directly to Rochester?
A. I come. I was only two days in New York.
Q. So you were really headed for Rochester?
A. Huh?
Q. You were headed? You were directed...?
A. They bring me to my family in Rochester.
Q. That's right.
A. My... my... they was already in Rochester.
Q. That's right.
A. You seen the article? You see that the...
Q. I read the article.
A. The article?
Q. That appeared in the Jewish... no the Brighton-Pittsford Post.
A. You like this article?
Q. Yea, it was...
A. Nice. A little too sweet. A little too sweet. Everything have to be good.
Q. Yea.
A. Letter have to be good, all the people have to be good.
Q. Yea.
A. You see the... the life is not... is not, you see, published. Life is sometimes complicated, too. Still it is...
Q. Not... is not...
A. Good... she need... she needed it. This is a paper with everything have to be good. Have to be a family. Have to be a wife, have to be children, you understand?
Q. I understand.
A. She was with a good intension and she can write.
Q. Right.
A. You see that she can write, a nice girl. Very nice girl. She can... she know... can please all...
Q. Right.
A. When I come here was everything still exist, Jewish clubs, Yiddish clubs, and the people was talking more Yiddish than...
Q. Here in Rochester?
A. In Rochester, yes.
Q. I didn't realize that there was that...
A. Twenty years ago, eighteen years ago.
Q. There were still... there was a strong Yiddish environment?
A. Yes, environment. Yes.
Q. I didn't realize...
A. Not only in the synagogue. When you realize... how long you are in Rochester?
Q. Not long.
A. That's why you have...
Q. Six years.
A. Six years in Rochester.
Q. Why was there a strong Yiddish life and how did that... how did that happen? Where did you meet these people and how did you get together?
A. Because we give... two organizations, the Workman Circle...
Q. Right.
A. This is labor movement, and Farbund Labor Zionist, which is still labor people, with the tailors and other things. You have to know that it is the labor people is now not so much like it was before. Tailor business is no more, but the Italians and by the Jews are not so much now involved in tailor business, the old people are die, you see?
Q. Right.
A. The new people has some education.
Q. Right.
A. Like you, for example. Let me say that your father was a tailor.
Q. No.
A. No. Your grandfather was a tailor probably? No? Or great-grandfather?
Q. Probably great-grandfather.
A. Yea, probably. Yes.
Q. It goes back.
A. Yes. I saw grandfather...
Q. Yea.
A. ... which was tailors...
Q. I see.
A. Now, they are out of this industry.
Q. Right.
A. They are more the intelligent industry, see?
Q. Professionals.
A. Professionals.
Q. Right. Lawyers, doctors...
A. Lawyers, doctors, engineers, you see? They are working education, you see?
Q. OK. So that when you came here in 1958...
A. Still there was the old style.
Q. But was the Workmen's Circle in existence? And there were Jews involved in the circle?
A. Yea.
Q. In 1958?
A. 1958.
Q. Because the clothing industry, which was very big in Rochester, died out really very many years before 1958.
A. No. Step by step. Still was when I come was left...
Q. OK.
A. But still... still by 120 people were... 120 people is a lot, you see? Come everytime... now they are transfer to the senior levels...
Q. What?
A. They are transfer to the senior level department.
Q. Oh, the...
A. They are coming...

Q. Yea. Department.

A. Everyday they are doing nothing, they are all retired already, you see? They are coming only for jury and not in Yiddish.

Q. Not in Yiddish.

A. Sometimes in Yiddish. We am... I am working for Yiddish.

Q. I see.

A. I have... I have... I was before the head of the department for Yiddish things, a lot of Yiddish. We have here, what shall I tell you, 80 to 100 people which are still activists, active in Yiddish.

Q. In what way? Artistically?

A. Active means they are coming, they are doing something, you know? About Yiddish.

Q. But not politically. The Workmen's Circle, for example, that...

A. Politically they are with the labor movement.

Q. They are?

A. The labor movement, yea they are for... you see...

Q. Labor Zionism?

A. Not Labor Zionism. With labor movement, with money, money you see? They all of the channels of money, you see? This more a lodge...

Q. Yea.

A. ... than something a labor thing now.

Q. What is it called?

A. The same thing, Workmen's Circle.

Q. It is called Workmen's Circle.

A. Yea, same.

Q. And they meet...

A. Yea. Children of the Workmen's Circle are still living 77 years, 80 years.
Q. Right.
A. Give some older people. . .
Q. Is it entirely Jewish in composition?
A. Yea, Jewish.
Q. Entirely Jewish?
A. Yea.
Q. And that's existing to this day?
A. Yea.
Q. Although on a very small scale?
A. Small.
Q. Do you meet with these people?
A. Yes. Today but doing . . . but doing other . . .
Q. Right.
A. I was reciting for them poetry about writers. They publish . . . they have some . . .
Q. Want me to help you with that?
A. . . . cultural. . . wait a second. . . cultural organizations, they have some cultural organizations. I . . . which helps me to publish my books. I publish here eight books, six books in Yiddish, big books, too. Now there's the Community Federation, Community Center. . .
Q. In Yiddish?
A. In Yiddish. And two books in English.
Q. And these groups help you that way?
A. Yea.
Q. How do they help?
A. People from them.
Q. How do they help?
A. They was sending... it was committees, committees together with Rabbi Karp.
You know Rabbi Karp?
Q. Yea, sure.
A. He is one from the Temple Beth... B'rith Kodesh and other peoples. Elmer
Louis and other people. We have a committee, we send out letters. They send
money.
Q. I see. What I find interest... interesting is that there are these Yiddish
groups when you first came to Rochester and that they still... .
A. Smaller.
Q. Today?
A. Smaller, smaller scale.
Q. But they meet regularly?
A. I am making them meeting. For example, we have a meeting this Sunday how to
organize for this next year our events for the next year. We are bringing
singers in Yiddish. One is Italian singer which is my friend special. A
beautiful girl, let me see, her name is... her name is Jeanette LaBianca.
Q. Where is she from?
A. From Buffalo, born.
Q. Right.
A. She was... she was in the Italian opera.
Q. Right.
A. She had... she had to... she know... she got in the opera because she
is short. She is very beautiful. She has a voice, a colorateur, maybe five
in America this kind of colorateur.
Q. It's...
A. Great. And she knows Yiddish songs, not only she knows 19 songs... 19
languages to sing. You see? She knows liturgy, Jewish liturgy like a hazan,
A. (Continued) you know? All the songs and other things. She begins with a talas to sing. If you will see this girl you will... I bring her the first time and they... and the first time they tell why you have to bring an Italian girl you have to bring? But this Italian girl sings better than Yiddish girls, Yiddish songs.

Q. She, herself, is Yiddish?
A. She is not Yiddish.
Q. Not Yiddish.
A. She is a goya, Italian. I will show you the letters she sent me. I would not say she's in love with me, she likes me, you understand? Very much.

Q. Yea.
A. I bring her five times here. She was appearing yearly. The greatest success. First of all, she's nice, beautiful. And she is a colorateur, I told you, I hear colorateurs in Russia, too, great. She has a colorateur, this... short... short girls don't show... not like tall. When she sings you can hear on the ears straight.

Q. That's something. I didn't know that... I didn't know that there was this much of an interest in something like this.
A. She was working for me a lot. I did when my work here, I was here the Yiddish consultant, author-in-residence, special for Yiddish. So from the beginning I was playing a bigger role. Later there's some politics to this, too. I would say you know this political town.

Q. No, go ahead.
A. No, this... this is teaching things, you see?
Q. So... so this...
A. What you don't know that politics is in the university? Never a place is without this.
Q. That's right.
A. You can be a... you can now be a full professor, let me say, but because somebody don't want it, you are only assistant professor or here at the university how you call it?
Q. Instructor.
A. Instructor.
Q. Right.
A. You can be when you have, let me think, people which stop it because they want to take this place, you understand?
Q. Yea, I understand.
A. So that this mean politics, there is never a place you have jealousy. It is natural by people you see? It's in the Bible, too.
Q. Everywhere.
A. I much... I am wondering, I am teaching my... my... my people the prophets. And the kings. You see, the Jewish kings was not less in this in ambitions than the kings around in the neighbor kings. Maybe a little... little bit less, more generous.
Q. Yea. Well, where is this jealousy and ambition that you're talking about?
A. Jealousy and ambition was by all persons, I would like to become 'cause it's real certainty.
Q. Yea. Well...
A. You... you don't need it? I don't need it. See, why... why we need to... to... this which is ambitions by people?
Q. Yea.
A. Now this I would be still the... the head of the department, the Jewish... now...
Q. You're saying that this exists though here in your life, this... this...
Q. (Continued) ... and you see this ambition and jealousy and this is interesting. ..
A. I see it this interference sometimes.
Q. Yea.
A. Ambitions between writers, too, ambitions, you see? I please to close out. This we don't need. We don't need it.
Q. Well, we won't talk. . . we'll talk about something else then.
A. Yes, and I. . . I will come back to the. . . to you. . . you was coming to ask me if I find here my friends, and I would say some positive things.
Q. Good. Well, we'll talk about positive things. But, let me just ask you. . .
A. I no want to call names, you see? I will tell you. . .
Q. Don't, don't. You don't have to do that.
A. No.
Q. You don't have to.
A. I tell you because I'm counting for the board. I don't like to talk about them. I like to talk about good things, you understand, because. . .
Q. I understand.
A. I, from my nature, I. . . I like good things.
Q. Well, there's no question. . .
A. I think around the world all the things. . .
Q. Yea. Well, there's no question that a major part of our discussion has been talking about good things.
A. And I told you that the good things was that they give me a place, they find. . . they will find Karp. . .
Q. Yea.
A. He was ambitious enough for me to find me a place to work because I no find a place. Ten years I was without a room.
Q. So Karp was important for finding you some help?
A. Very important to help me to be here, not in the former JY.
Q. Yea.
A. A lot of things he was doing for me.
Q. Good.
A. He's a good man.
Q. Yea.
A. Rabbi Karp, Rabbi Braunstein was here from the Reform Jews.
Q. B'rith Kodesh.
A. B'rith Kodesh. He... and he... and some from the Federation.
Q. When you first came to Rochester...
A. Don't help me.
Q. ... were you immediately...
A. No. I was... no... I was writing.
Q. You were just writing?
A. A lot. Then was the Forward more richer than now, so they print me.
Q. The Forward? You mean from New York City?
A. New York City. Two, three times a week. And I can live. Then, you see? A little I make a living. And I was more involved in giving lectures. I was going around America, around America. Only in this... in... in Los Angeles I was two times, two month. And by occasion of it, too. Two doctors, a man... a man and a woman, psychiatrist.
Q. Right.
A. With a library with three thousand books about psychology. You would like it.
Q. I bet.
A. You see, they are from Vienna.
Q. Oh.
A. Yes, you see, they're Jews. Jews, and they bring me and it cost me nothing to be with them. I have a room with a machine, a huge machine.

Q. Right.

A. And I use their library.

Q. Right.

A. And they was connected with doctors so everyday. . . everyday there was something, a talk or something, another thing. I appear for twelve organizations. This book, I save a few hundred copies. This kind of thing. I was in Pennsylvania. I was in Canada, I was in Montreal.

Q. So your first couple years here. . .

A. Was with lectures around America and with writings more.

Q. When did you stop travelling?

A. Travelling I stopped when I get my job here.

Q. I see. When was this. . . when was this?

A. This was I think. . . it will be ten years.

Q. So in 1966. . .

A. '66, yes.

Q. So for the first 8 years in America you were travelling around?

A. Around, yea.

Q. And writing for the Forbach?

A. The Forward, yes.

Q. I see. And then you got the job here with the community.

A. Yes and everyday. . . every year they raise me, the money. They begin with very, very little and later they . . . they raise me the money, you see?

Q. Good.

A. I can make a little living.

Q. Now . . .
A. My wife was working, too.

Q. Well, you were working really though with the JY? This was downtown on Andrews Street?
A. Yes, Andrews Street.

Q. And this building was built only three years ago.
A. Yes, only, yes.

Q. So for about ten years you were downtown, a little less than ten years.
A. Seven years.

Q. Yea, right. Seven years, exactly.
A. Seven years I was downtown.

Q. Downtown on the Andrews Street location.
A. Always was a good boy that... he likes Yiddish a lot.

Q. Who... who is this?
A. Was a man which was...

Q. Yea.
A. ... the director of the JY.

Q. I see. And he... he promoted Yiddish?
A. Promoted Yiddish.

Q. He promoted...
A. Whether he was American-born, you see, no... Whether he don't know too good Yiddish or understands Yiddish, very good that he promoted Yiddish.

Q. I see.
A. So that he come... Shukovsky comes already to heritage, was already formed. And I am a man, I organize not so bad, you understand? So that I make him around to see the first appearing, was 200 people was coming, you see?

Q. Right.
A. We was creating a club in the name of I. L. Peretz, Peretz, a club. And I begin to work, you see? And I find people which help me, Forwards help me and other organizations, the whole Jewish Congress helps me.

Q. Right.

A. I get three prizes for my books, three honorary prizes in this.

Q. Oh, that certificate of honor?

A. No this is a prize, money, too.

Q. Good.

A. From the Jewish Book Club of America.

Q. Right.

A. And two other prizes.

Q. Jewish Book Council of America?

A. America, yea.

Q. Right.

A. Yes, this was chosen from sixty books. It was a great... a great...

Q. Honor.

A. Real. For them about 500 people.

Q. OK. Good.

A. So that is one... now later the shul, the Yiddish school, extinguished because of politics, too.

Q. Which... which school?

A. It was a Yiddish... a school for Yiddish... Jewish children to learn Yiddish.

Q. What... what name of the school? Do you remember?

A. The name of the school I don't remember. Yiddish School.

Q. Rochester?

A. Yes. In Rochester.
Q. Yea. Yea, I...
A. Place was in the Workmen's Circle because they have this.
Q. A little folk shul.
A. Folk shul, yea.
Q. That closed... when did that close?
A. Closed when I come, they closed.
Q. So you really weren't much a part of this?
A. No, I wasn't a part of it.
Q. But the reason... 
A. He was a part of it, Hoffman, you know? One of the mans here which is...
Q. No.
A. Secretary of the... he's a politician. He was... and after that was between the... the workers for the shul... 
Q. Yea.
A. ... who will be... who will be... who will have the credit, you see? Even sometimes arguing with the teachers. The teachers everytime they see the man which they are kick him out sometimes in schools, same like a rabbi.
Q. Yea.
A. They wanted free... free rabbis for a long time, you understand?
Q. Yea.
A. So there is somebody trade me the news, you see, they kick him out.
Q. Yea.
A. Even after politics.
Q. But, you know, it seems to me that it can't only be politics because I mean the interest in Yiddish culture...
A. The interest in Yiddish culture, too, is slow. Still exists in the shuls. But for example, the end of this month will be a World Congress for Yiddish in
A. (Continued)  Israel. And all the world will come there. How much it will help I don't know because we need more the people than the holy declarations, you see?

Q. Oh, yes, yea.

A. Declarations will not help you nothing, like the declarations of the United Nations. You understand? We need the people, good people.

Q. Right. Sure.

A. This is like Lebanon, you see? All the world see that a country is destroyed, you know about the putzafim there to help to make something to make good. I think when the big power would help a little more... it's a... it's a good country. Lebanon is a good country or not?

Q. Mmm-hmm.

A. Never mix in politics. They want to live and... lieb and lieben lassen, you see? Lebanon never was fighting with Israel, maybe in the old times, three thousand years ago.

Q. Yea.

A. This what I want to tell you. Nobody... we was doing everything what we can, and we are doing now everything what we can. We will have for the next session, next season, seven, eight events in Yiddish. Some of them are... are besides them what I was creating people, I was teaching them how to speak, you see? I educate them.

Q. Right.

A. So that I have people now which can make speeches, not only Emiot can make speeches, you understand?

Q. I understand.

A. So that they are... they was shy to talk, you see, these people? I have learn them to appear, and I give them all the materials what they need for
A. (Continued) example a writer. Let me say "osh" or write Shalom Aleyhem.
I give him all the books what I have about Shalom Aleyhem. And I give him my own ... my own thoughts about him. And they are talking, you see? So that if somebody dies, so you see, if I will die, and I will not live too long, is ... I have somebody who will follow me.

Q. I understand.
A. You understand, who will follow me?
Q. Yea.
A. You ... you think probably that the Yiddish is ... is judged to be extinguished, yes? No, is not so. I think that still they will ... if not all the people because you need to have shuls for that ...

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (Interview II)
Q. This is Dennis Klein, we're talking with Israel Emiot. And this is Tape No. 2, Side A. And will you continue talking about this interest in Yiddish culture? You're convinced that it won't die out.

A. It will not die. I am convinced that it will not die. Maybe it will be smothered. Yiddish is sick, not dying.

Q. Right. Lying dormant, it's asleep.

A. It will take time, you see? You no can be sure in everything, you see? Cultures are extinguished. You know that cultures are extinguished?

Q. Yes.

A. I learn where the Greek culture was in all the world, and now it's only a small part in the world at most. About Aristophanes, you see? About... about Gilgamesh, what is there plus Gilgamesh? No... no, only this... only scientists and scholars know what is Gilgamesh, epics. Or the other, Iliad or Odyssey.

Q. Right.

A. Or what is... who is Annacarone. Or other things which was the ABC for the intelligentsia years ago. Not to teach... they don't teach now Greek in the... in the... in the colleges, too.

Q. Not too much.

A. Not too much, in the old time they was teaching.

Q. The only thing...

A. Greek or Latin, you see?

Q. Latin is kind of in. There's still interest in Latin.

A. A little, not too much.
Q. Not much. And, of course, in the German bildung there was, of course, much emphasis on the Greek and Latin.

A. Greek and Latin, not now.

Q. Not America.

A. Yes.

Q. I want to ask you, if I may, a series of questions about your impressions of Jewish life in Rochester. And I want to begin by asking you this question: It seems as if now the center of Jewish life in Rochester is, as this name implies here in Brighton, with the Jewish Community Center. It... it is away from the city generally. It's located in a suburb of wealth. This building, of course, betrays how much interest and how much financial backing there was to construct this building.

A. A lot.

Q. A lot.

A. Seven and a half million dollars.

Q. A lot. Which is, I think, an enormous amount.

A. Yea, great. But from the other side, if not this building there would not be a center you see? Because the people would not come here. Jewish population is moving.

Q. To Brighton?

A. To Brighton. To Brighton, to Pittsford, to other places, Irondequoit.

Q. Right.

A. Not to the downtown.

Q. Not downtown.

A. No.

Q. In fact, they moved away from... 

A. I'm living downtown because I'm... I'm rich. I no belong to the rich.
A. (Continued) You see?
Q. I see.
A. I not middle class, too. We are poor people. I tell you the truth, I am not rich. I get only my check and here I make $2,700 which is a lot not more.
Q. Yea. Oh, I see.
A. And the falls I don't make too much, I no want to make too much, not allowed to make too much. To make a lot of money you have to go to the income tax, you know, to the . . . to the . . . there are other benefits what I have. I have receive a check which I get from the retirement, you see?
Q. Yes, I understand.
A. You're not allowed to make more than $2,700 or maybe $3,000.
Q. Ah ha. For that reason.
A. For that reason. I don't make more. My wife gets her check and it costs a lot of money now to earn a living.
Q. Boy, I'll say.
A. Lot of money.
Q. I know.
A. If my son, for example, makes a little money he buys a car for $4,000. He no have money to give us.
Q. It's difficult these days.
A. Difficult and I pay for . . . there I pay $118.
Q. So the contrast between your life home and here in Brighton is considerable?
A. Yea, see I . . . I no am jealous. I happy this way. If it will not be violence, because there's too much violence and I can't stand it . . .
Q. Yea.
A. Too much violence in my area.
Q. Yea.
A. Very much violence.
Q. Yea, that's not good.
A. Most run away from there because too much violence. A lot of violence. The poor people cannot do that, you know that they are living there still. And your synagogue is there and other things, you see?
Q. Yea, right.
A. So this is all poor people, people working, people. . . here is low income, I will not say rich, very rich people, middle class people.
Q. That's right. Do you think that the quality of Jewish life in Rochester, though, as you see it from your office here in the JCC and as well as in Brighton, which is now the center of Jewish community. . .
A. I want to tell you. From my office I no see nothing. I cease to like contact with people, you understand?
Q. Yea.
A. And I talk to people, then I know. People. . . to me are coming a lot of people.
Q. Right.
A. Womans and mens, different people. I have. . . I have students which are coming to me. And I talk to them private, then I know what. . . what. . . what is with them.
Q. In other words . . .
A. Complicated their life, you see? For a writer I want to tell you, the old life more colorful in the shtetl, you see?
Q. It was more colorful?
A. More colorful. See, here is one with another is very near one to the other. The Bar Mitzvah is. . . all Bar Mitzvahs is trying to make rich Bar Mitzvahs, five thousand, six thousand, seven thousand dollars a Bar Mitzvah.
Q. Yea, yea.
A. But, if they don't need it they can send it for poor people.
Q. Yea.
A. See, how many poor people are in the world. The world if four billion people, one billion people is poor, don't have to eat. And everybody takes away from him. Only five percent of everything, of Bar Mitzvah, among other things and give it to them.
Q. Yea.
A. These are the same with non-Jewish people, and all the rest are... you see, I make the brush out, would be a little save the world.
Q. I understand what you're saying. It must therefore be uncomfortable for you, or perhaps even a little painful to see this wealth that is fairly obvious, very obvious...
A. It is very obvious, very nice, very nice. I'm happy that my brothers are enough, you see, healthy to make a nice living, that's nice. And sometimes we have to think about... about the Israel or about other things. And give away.
Q. Yea.
A. You understand?
Q. I understand. Or to Soviet Jewry.
A. Or Soviet Jewry.
Q. You mentioned a while ago...
A. I told you that the colorful...
Q. That's right.
A. ... is not the colorful 'cause only the... you can see from my story, their life is like life... and Gentiles, too, the same thing, you see? Whether all the life, all the world, is the same, you see? The countries... is the
A. (Continued) same in Russia, too. And I will tell you my experience in Russia. You don't... this is not for the... the minutes. You don't have to Rochester. I will show you that the same conflicts in the world, disappointments, are the same. There was another system and another thing.

Q. The same kind of frustrations...
A. The same kind of frustrations...
Q. Disappointments...
A. Same kinds of disappointments...
Q. Pain...
A. Same things, pain.
Q. Humility.
A. Yes. Same as here, too.
Q. Same here, too.
A. You see?
Q. But it isn't as colorful?
A. Huh?
Q. It isn't as colorful?
A. Not as colorful, no.
Q. Why is that?
A. Interesting.
Q. Why is that?
A. Huh?
Q. Why isn't...?
A. Because... because one to the other is very near.
Q. What is very near?
A. One episode to the other episode is very near, is no different, you understand?
Q. Yea.
A. Is no difference. And zo, zo, zo, zo... this combination, this combination. It close this out because we with Rochester, we are finish.

Q. Now I have some questions...

A. Huh? You have other questions?

Q. Yea. I mean I'd be interested in why life as you see it, Jewish life, in Rochester doesn't have the same color, the same quality, the same characteristics...

A. As it was in old country, eh?

Q. Right. Why?

A. The other side... Why?

Q. Yes. Or what is the difference? I mean you said that there's the same disappointments, the same frustrations, the same joy, the same happinesses in Russia as in Rochester.

A. Yes.

Q. So, what's the difference then?

A. I no tell you that in Russia was interesting. I tell you about the shtetl.

Q. The shtetl, I'm sorry. You're right.

A. Another thing... The Russia is another thing, which I will tell you later when we close out.

Q. OK.

A. Tell you about...

Q. The question is...

A. One... one fact I will tell you what I knew. I knew... I have a lot of experience in my life.

Q. I'll say.

A. And I know the life very, very good. Very, very good. You can't imagine this old man knows a good life. This is like Lady Macbeth would say, oh this old man
A. (Continued) has so much life in himself. You know Lady Macbeth?

Q. Yea, sure.

A. She said you would not imagine, you see, what he has.

Q. Right.

A. I will tell you later. Why I will tell you this is because in order to give a new generation... I knew, for example, my friend... is not friend, is not religious. Absolutely not religious. His son becomes religious, he's now a doctor, a doctor, a scholar, biology. And he takes a girl which is religious too. And they make a religious wedding. He takes a girl which is religious, you see?

Q. Mmm-hmm.

A. I will show you.

Q. Yea, but don't close out the microphone here.

A. The what?

Q. Microphone.

A. You will see, she's a very interesting girl.

Q. Yea.

A. Very interesting. There's come up a new generation which likes Jewish traditions. Maybe not Yiddish self, nor Jewish tradition, but I would not expect... I come to teach people religion to this boy which was poor, which was growing up in non-religious people, you see? It was different. I will find it later.

Q. OK. What is different though?

A. Different.

Q. You know what I'm saying? In other words, why can't a writer like yourself derive the same kind of experiences, and I know the experiences were different, no question about that. Differences are almost like night and day.
Q. (Continued) Isn't that true? Between what you've seen in Rochester and America and what you've seen in the... in the... in Poland, the shtetl. I mean, it's like night and day.

A. Shtetl first of all I was younger, maybe because I was younger in the... in the... in the old traditions was tradition, you see?

Q. Right.

A. Full with tradition, color, from me in my younger... 

Q. That's true. That's a good point.

A. And I am older now.

Q. That's true.

A. I look at things like one is near to the other thing.

Q. Right.

A. You see? I have too much experience from before, you see, Russia. I lead an interesting life, you see? The people depend on the other, too. I think of Rabbi Miller, for example, a very interesting person.

Q. Yea.

A. And he tries to make some color in... in the... in his community, I mean in his synagogue. Don't forget that the synagogue plays a great role, too, beside the... the Jewish Community Center.

Q. Right. You're thinking... you think that Rabbi Miller is trying to...

A. To do... to do something colorful, not only something interesting.

Q. Like what, for example?

A. Jewish identity and another way, not a form way, you understand?

Q. In a what way?

A. Not a form way.

Q. Yea.

A. Not the old tradition, I would say, religious tradition...
Q. Reform way, yea.
A. A form way.

Q. Jewish identity and what else is he trying to . . . ?
A. Color, for example, all our . . . the Holocaust, for example, he tried to get the people to teach them what was happened with our people, the time from the Holocaust.

Q. Right. The Holocaust.
A. The Holocaust, Jewish holidays. In another way, you see? Not like the Orthodox.

Q. Right.
A. No, still with color, you see?

Q. So he is . . .
A. Zionism, he's a man in the place.

Q. So that's an important thing to have happened here?
A. And social . . . social things, too. He's universal, too. For example, he is fighting for justice, you see? For justice.

Q. Justice.
A. He's not reactionary.

Q. Do you think that Jews here are responding to that?
A. I think so. Some of them, not all. Some of them are responding to that.

Q. Do you think that the location of the JCC is a good one? This . . . this center?
A. Is a good location.

Q. Because there are so many Jews living in Brighton?
A. Yea, your most . . . most Jews from Brighton would not come to the old, Jews of all ages, area, bad area.

Q. Right.
A. They come in the... in the night.
Q. Right.
A. And this is nice.
Q. This is nice.
A. The night woman here would not come to this old building.
Q. That's true.
A. Here is nice, beautiful you see? Like temple.
Q. Yea.
A. A big temple in the city in old time.
Q. Beautiful.
A. Beautiful. Well, I... you... you will look around you will... you no saw everything.
Q. I haven't seen everything.
A. No.
Q. I saw the swimming pool.
A. You have to go... you have to go two hours to see everything what is happen. The little childs to... to older people.
Q. One of the things that strikes me about this though, if I may say... .
A. Yea.
Q. You mentioned a while back how your article in the... in the Brighton-Pittsford. . .
A. Not my article, article about me.
Q. Right. You, yes. Was... was sweet. Everything was good. I mean, that was a criticism, I think. You were kind of saying everything isn't so sweet. Everything isn't so good.
A. I told you.
Q. Yes, me.
A. Yes.
Q. Now, is that a criticism that... that one can make about Jewish life in Rochester today? That, you know, everything seems to be good and sweet but really people are not dealing with the problems of life. Is that a possible criticism that... that one can make about the Rochester community, Rochester today?
A. That everything is sweet?
Q. Yea. In other words...
A. Not everything is sweet.
Q. But are Jews dealing with that?
A. They are doing... the Jews are trying to do what... what they can. For example, a lot of money is going to Israel, you see?
Q. Yea.
A. And this is taking from themself, is a lot of things...
Q. So Jews...
A. ... Jews are doing other things very good. You see, good? And I told you it was because if you look in this article you see that the sentimental good, everything is good. But... you... you are in the same opinion?
Q. I don't think everything is...
A. No, but you read this article?
Q. Yea.
A. He has children...
Q. Ah, yes, exactly.
A. He got a wife.
Q. It was sentimentalized.
A. Sentimentalized. You see? And I am far for be sentimental, you understand?
Q. I understand. That's a good point.
A. This experience what I have in my life, whether I'm still good and better by maybe than before I was going to the prison, because I knew more the life.

Q. Right.

A. The bitterness of life, so that I am forgiving a lot people, you understand? What they are doing because I see that something is in the circumstances and people are not guilty for them.

Q. OK.

A. I can tell you a lot of happier...

Q. What... what's interesting to me, if I may say?

A. Yea.

Q. Is that the... the people who are responsible for giving this story about you, for printing it in the newspaper...

A. A nice woman first of all.

Q. Very nice.

A. Want to tell you.

Q. OK.

A. Good woman.

Q. OK.

A. She had the best intentions. What she knows...

Q. But is that...

A. She knows here... she knows her editor, her editor need it for his...

Q. I understand. But I...I guess the question is... is that... is this sentimental viewpoint representative of Jews generally in Rochester? Is there that tendency to be sentimental, to be sweet? You know, to be...

A. Appearances.

Q. Yea.

A. Appearances, outside.
Q. Do you think that's...
A. Be the same, yes.
Q. Do you think that exists here?
A. Exist a little, yes.
Q. Yea.
A. This is the tradition... this is what they call tradition. See that he has
to be a wife, has to be... there does not have to be conflicts, you see? A
man have to be close to his family because this is Jewish tradition.
Q. Right.
A. Comes home and this... and the house is according to the Talmud is a
migda schmaat, is like a temple, you understand?
Q. Right.
A. Have to be conflicts. However, it is now temple... see, so many conflicts
between parents and fathers and sons. And they have problems the same like
Gentiles have problems.
Q. Right.
A. Why I don't know. We have violence, not maybe like Gentiles because they are
still...
Q. Right.
A. They have traditions from the Jews, have a good family.
Q. Right.
A. It's no easy.
Q. Right. So you... you're saying the tradition...
A. Still exists.
Q. Still... still exists.
A. Yes. The Hassidic is another thing. You understand the Hassidism movement
was not sweet. See, they was fighting with sweet. It was different. And
A. (Continued) because is give this proverb from all of the rabbis, she said, when somebody will go very far away in a forest... 

Q. Right.

A. ... in a special building, little building, she builds them up for... for to be concentrate, see? And G-d and other things. And it will be only one open place in this building where somebody can look inside. Is always thinking that will be somebody will stop behind him and look at his concentrate. The secretism, you see? Of himself.

Q. Right.

A. See, he is looking?

Q. Right.

A. Now this is only a proverb, I want to tell you. But the Hassidim was criticizing themselves and everybody.

Q. That's right. Right.

A. Not to be sweet, you see? They was tearings and then... 

Q. There was a lot of agony involved?

A. Agony involved, you see?

Q. But not so much the traditions that we're talking about, that we see here in Rochester, for example. The conflicts are... 

A. Yes. The conflicts are not so big. Oh, is like in everyplace is conflicts. A girl... a woman she had a husband, for example, can't be in friendship affair with another with a man, with another man.

Q. Right.

A. This has happened.

Q. And it happens everywhere.

A. It happens everywhere.

Q. Every culture.
A. Every culture.
Q. And Rochester's not unique that way.
A. Not unique, cannot be. Is no easy. And I understand this. The... the reasons can be different, you see? So this... among other things. No, with that we are finish and you can all that...
Q. OK. We are through...
A. We are through.
Q. OK.
A. Now I will tell you about Russia.
Q. About Russia.
A. One fact I want to tell you.
Q. About what?
A. This don't have to do with your project.
Q. Right. So you don't want it... OK.
A. No. Right.
Q. May I ask you one more question?
A. Hmm?
Q. May I ask you one more question?
A. I think with this is finish.
Q. This is finished?
A. Yes.
Q. Well, thank you.
A. You are interesting in what I told you? I told you my personal view.
Q. Yea.
A. And this...
Q. I think that was interesting.
A. Fact, facts you see? My look, my view.
Q. OK. And that. . .
A. I don't know if you are interested in. . .
Q. That in itself is a fact.
A. Hmm?
Q. Your view is a fact.
A. Right. Close it out and then we will. . .
Q. OK.
A. . . talk. Behind the. . . the minutes, you see?
Q. You don't want to talk about this on the tape?
A. End the tape, yes, now.
Q. OK.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B (Interview II)