

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Paul Matasovski
August 8, 1989
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Paul Matasovski, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on August 8, 1989 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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PAUL MATASOVSKI

August 8, 1989

Q: . . . please, and when you were born?

A: Uh, my name is Paul Matasovski. And uh I was born in a small town in Moldavia--Romania--called Bac_u, in December 1933.

Q: OK. Tell me about the family. Tell me about your family.

A: Uh, well, uh it's an interesting story is my family. My father--Leonid, his name was--he was born in Russia, near Kiev. And he came to Romania in 1917, probably with the Russian Army. Nineteen...maybe early 1915, 1916; and after the Russian revolution in 1917, he decided to stay in Moldavia. It's a small town, Bac_u. So he was a young man, and uh he was interested in uh automobiles and cars. At that time was very new things, cars. So in, even in the Army, if I recall my father's stories, he was in a unit who handled car repairs. So he was a kind of specialist in cars. So he starts some, some kind of work in car repair in my small town. My mother, Maria, was born in another small town, my guess, called Falticeni, in northern Moldavia. And with her parents come this small town Bac_u.

Q: How would you spell that town that she came from?

A: Uh, yes, uh, the town of Falticeni is F-A-L-T-I-C-E-N-I, approximately. So we are close to say Falticeni. And uh her father, if I recall, my grandfather, he died before the Second War, and she had a sister who uh died during the war. Was a lot of diseases at that time. And she was with her mother in the small town Bac_u. So my father once walked downtown approximately where my mother lived and saw nice girl outside in front of the house and started to talk to her. And he came a couple of times, the same way, because he has the feeling that he likes her. So shortly after probably a couple of months, if I recall, my father told to my mother that he wants to talk to her mother. And why to talk to her mother? Because I want to ask your hand. I want to marry you. So it's a kind of excitement, and uh, in principle they agreed to marry and start to see more often. And probably after one year, they married. So uh, my family life started I guess in the 20's after the war. I don't know if I was clear enough, but this is our start, the whole family.

Q: What was it like for you as a child growing up in Bac_u?

A: It was interesting. Uh, now after so many years, when I recall how it was to be a child, it's, maybe it's different and my last years I went, and I grow and I leave and I work in very big cities, but at that time, even I know that it was a small city. For me, for all the children, Bac_u was a very, very big city. And if I can recall, maybe I was when I recall first time, I may be five years old or four years old. I went to kindergarten. We start to play on the streets. We always, my friends, we tried to play on our backyards and front yards. And again the streets, we, we played, we used to spend lots of time on the streets running and playing

and all kinds of things. As I recall our street was a dirty street and we liked at that time when it was raining, to go under the rain, and after the big rain on the street was a lot of uh _____ creeks, water creeks. Running water. And we liked to, to run uh barefoot and to make all kinds of paper boats to throw away. And was a lot of fun. What can I tell you. At that age. And to know for sure no matter what happened, we have to go home very early in the evening. To be ready for dinner. Was a tradition, probably in our family, other families, for families to be together for lunch, for dinner, for whatever. Whenever we eat. And I remember my mother told me once, you can go where ever want, approximately, but be home at five o'clock or six o'clock, what time was for the dinner. So was, I have very nice feelings and we didn't have any very big problems at that time. We didn't know about problems. We tried to plan you know. Like every kids every where, you know, have the same, probably saw the kind of beeing. We were no different from other people, other young people, other kids.

Q: OK. What, were, did you have any sense of uh, what was it like to be a Jew in Bac_u?

A: Bac_u even was a small town, had a big Jewish community over there. And uh, the Jewish community, even some section of the city, like uh I cannot say ghetto, but uh some two, three, four streets, famous because the Jews live over there. And most of the middle class and maybe poor Jewish people live in the same section of the town. And other streets in other part were lot of Jewish families over there. So uh first time I uh, I start to, to think about to be Jews, when we go for the holy days to the synagogue. My parents, especially my grandmother, uh, start to take, to take us, me and later on my brother, for the holy days in the fall and the spring to the synagogue. So we start to, to, to know about the Jewish life and to know about uh other Jewish children over there, and what I remember, which was a lot of fun for us, for uh Passover, Passover, there are two things which I recall today. We use some special uh dishes, special plates for Passover, and we kept in attic, so and packing all kinds of paper. I notice my mother, before the Passover, told us to go in attic and to bring the dishes. And so was very big event to go, you know, to climb, in the attic and to come back. Another thing which I recall, besides other things, to get uh matzos, what you call this, matzos? Was, you couldn't buy in the stores like we go today in all the stores and buy, you know, we want for uh Passover. It was only one manufacturer where the Jewish community center. We have a big Jewish community center, as I recall, and you have to go and they start to manufacture during the, before the Passover. So was a big line. You don't have to uh to make a reservation. Everybody comes and stay on the line and take the matzos home. So it was a big, big event to go and to go as a cart, as a carriage, people to take the matzos to bring home. And other interesting uh story that I remember, may be like a tradition, I don't know what. Before the Passover, always, my parents bought new clothes for us, you know. So they bought all the time you know, clothes. But for Passover, it was, we were kids with this and new clothes, and go in the street and everybody wanted to show. Look to me how good clothes I'm wearing. Kids, but everybody wanted to show what kind of new clothes as we have over there, so it was kind of fun, you know, for Passover. And uh, later on, I start to go to the school, to elementary school and uh, to junior high school. The system of schools is different than here and now. But first time, we uh found in our

classes some Jewish and non-Jewish kids, and we knew some families in neighborhood. So uh many, we start to make friends, it's true non-Jewish and Jewish friends. But the time went by, and the more after the year start to appear some sign of anti-Semitism. The more the Jewish kids, Jewish students come together, because they sometimes was the object of some bad words, maybe bad action. After a, after a while some uh Jewish students sometimes start to congregate, to gatherings during breaks and uh after work and before work, so uh was a big connection between uh I can say Jewish students of all ages.

Q: Were there, what changes, did any changes take place in 1933 when Hitler came to power in Germany? What began in the '30s to happen in Romania, if anything?

A: I guess happened many things, like in the all world and uh I was very young, uh young boy at the time. But already I remember very well in my family, my father and I guess in that period was '33, '34, was the first time a radio in our house and we (were) not very rich, I guess, like middle class, we didn't have a radio, so he bought a second-hand radio. And we start to listen to the radio. And we started at that time to hear more and more about Germany, about Hitler, about what's going on. So the people start to, to talk and I heard in our family, talking with some friends, talking about what happened in Germany. And people already become to be anxious about what the future will bring because we had some feelings, not to I say we, we kids, but Jewish people said something's starting to, to, to change. It's a quietness and it's a quiet life which was before over there. And if I remember again was a lot of articles in the press at the time about the events. And uh, was some kind of discussion now and people start to talk more, but was only talk at this time about Germany, about Hitler, about the situation in our town.

Q: And when the war actually broke out, what happened?

A: Now we come to the period of time when I guess I remember most about what happened and to my recollection I have more lively now, you know. And matter of fact, even before, before the war started, the war started in '41, if I remember June, I say 21, '41, the war started, the German started to cross the Soviet Union's border. But before '41 already the situation was very tense. Number one, in '39, '38, when Hitler start to act aggressively and to enter Austria in '38 and Czechoslovakia if I remember, we were more anxious and many people, many Jewish people, start to think to emigrate from Romania. And our lot of town is the young organization over there, and uh, always uh Zionist uh movement try to convince people to immigrate to Palestine even before the war. By the events that happening before the war, in '38, '39, the international events start to show to the people, specially to the Jewish people, to find a way to escape in case Hitler would come close to our borders. But between or besides the international conditions, uh domestic conditions change. Some fascist organizations like Iron Guard and other organizations start to become more, more aggressive. And they start to take action against the Jewish people. They start on the street to, to beat some Jewish people in '39 with some, some, some uh big uh, uh grow of this organization encouraged by Germans, by other groups. So in '30, '39 the situation start to be very tense for all the people. And I have to, to tell you no probably and

I'm sure that when the German went to Poland and occupied in September, I don't know, September 1st if I recall, beginning of September, we heard by the radio, but after two, three days already the Polish troop start to run from Poland and to come toward Moldavia to Romania. And one day, one morning, I remember like now, it was four in the morning, we heard a large noise, big noise on the, my street, and like a big column of tanks or heavy vehicles start to moving. Unusual noise for a small city. So everybody went out. It was four, five in the morning. And we saw some columns of trucks, loaded with uh Polish soldiers. Dirty, uh thirsty, very very uh tired, like escaped from, from the war. And the first thing they always asked for water, some food and was a very very depressed situation. It would depress anybody. And to know for yourself as the first time what the war means. We saw on our streets, and was in '39, and uh the Polish troops start to, to get out of the vehicle, ask for more food. They start to trade something, want it to be free, and there's long story what happens uh Polish troop. But began the first sign when we saw the war in our uh, in the middle of our house. So we understand that the situation aggravate and aggravate more and more. So even before the war started in '40 other international events and domestic events starting to, to, to uh, to occur over there and the Iron Guard and other fascist organizations become more powerful. And the political situation start to uh, to be very tense and as we know, in '40 and beginning on '41 was a big change. The king was take over from the throne, was uh expelled out, and uh General Antonescu _____ the power and installed a very fasciest dictatorship together with Iron Guard, which was very extremist, but after the war start a fight for many reasons, not now the place to go to tell between Iron Guard and General Antonescu. And General Antonescu become very powerful and in charge of the situation. And he start uh, '40, end of the '40, beginning of '41, to take some uh very drastic measures against the Jewish people over there. So before the war start, I can say that we felt strong already the impact of fascist dictatorship government in our country. I can elaborate more if you want what happened.

Q: No, no. That's fine. That's fine. Uh, what, talk a little bit about uh, what kind of groups were you in at that time? Were you members of youth groups, were you involved in anything as the war approached, '39, '40?

A: Yes. Yes. This is other interesting story. Like I told you when uh in our city and in other probably city, there was a lot of uh Zionist organizations. Young organizations, not young, and other political organizations, non-Jewish, with democratic tendency for more kinds of uh political uh beliefs. And they understand, uh many people understand that the time comes to do something. It's not only to wait to see what happen will happen. So there started a lot of discussion between uh young people, maybe old people too, to find a way to organize something to do. And uh, specially I can say, in uh '40, the government, the fascist government, uh issue a lot of laws against the Jewish people. And one of them between many was a uh forbidding children, students, Jewish students was expelled from the public school. And here comes a very, very interesting situation position of the Jewish community, because when all the students, Jewish students, were expelled from the school, immediately was the Jewish local, Jewish leaders and the rabbis have big meetings what to do. So they decided again maybe my recollection time-wise not exactly month or year, but and '40,

beginning or end or the fall of '40 or beginning of '41, the Jewish community sent or decided to organize own school for Jewish students. They promised to find the space, to find the teachers, and was a big problem. And I recall something about they decide to give the space and other space available was the Jewish community center and start to organize the first high school in the, in our town. And there a lot of professional people who never in their lives they were teachers. They offer their service to be teachers. They got engineers, we have architects, and maybe other professional people, lawyer I remember, who become teachers. So we start to have our, our schools. So we start an hour of school to discuss a lot about what has to be done and besides uh learning and teaching and the teachers, the students start to talk about to do something. So we start to organize some group, as a mixture of Zionist young people, non-Zionist people, and to have some friends who are non-Jewish in other school. And we start to talk to them as much as possible. It was very difficult to start to make connections. And was other political parties, democrat parties start to, to, to uh enter, to think about organize some. At that point we decide to organize some group over there to do something because we have some signal from abroad what start to happen to the Jewish people in uh Czechoslovakia and Poland. So we start to organize some group and to find a way to fight the German. Because now in the '41 the war started, the Jewish people more restricted in movements. They were confined to their home, specially to the Jewish young people, specially, and uh sent in uh the labor camp and mandatory factory to dig trenches for the war. Uh, they close the hospital, public hospital, to the Jewish uh patients, etc. etc. So was started to, to, talk and to think to do something, and we start to organize some groups. At one point between Jewish young people and non-Jewish young people over there.

Q: What kind of groups were they? What did they do?

A: Now this is very, very interesting uh question because basic is the beginning. The most important thing I guess, thinking now, we didn't, we didn't have any information about what was going on in the war because all the press was already the first of all, was uh interdict radio sets was taken from the Jewish people. All the Jewish people has to give_ beginning '40, '41, the radio sets. So was not a way to, to listen to the radio. The press was under the control, and they publish only what was interest, in the German interest was this way. And before the war and after the war starting to publish only war, German what you call communiques about the war. So one of the first things we sought was to find what was going on. So some, our friends have some connections, have some friends who are non-Jewish and start to, to have uh networks to find information what is going on through the people who had radios, have information based on their position, parents' position. And I remember even was two, three Jewish people who interested in the electronic like today and two of them decided to build from, from scratch, from nothing some small radio uh equipment in order to listen what is going on. So this one was the first action, and we start from time to time to have some uh, some news. They succeeded to uh get some information through some if I recall BBC from London and from probably from Russia they catch some, some news over there. But the interesting part with that uh the young people who, who put together this radio, during the day they dismantled the radio because if some police came in

house, they don't find the radio even and hiding the pieces and during the evening they put together. Was a very difficult operation. Basically, this is a fact, that was not uh parts put this way, and together parts was a big problem. So the first action was to get information and the, the second part was to uh disseminate this information. So we start to write the news in some small piece of paper and to give to other young people to, to read. So was a shade of transmission of the news. And I recall at one point, we start to find many ways to hide this small paper on which we, we wrote some, some news. So we start to take for example, some soaps and cut in half the soaps and make some, some holes, and put together and keep the uh hard papers, small papers, and using the paper and to give the soaps. Or other way to hide them and to transmit them as material some all kind of doors at one point I remember. Some, some toys we used. So this is the first part of the action, was related to knowing what was going on and where we stand. Later on we decided to, to start to do more, more action, more uh specially action against if we could the German, and if not the German uh troops, against the German uh place where they manufacture war products. So in our town was a couple of factory. If I recall one was textile factory manufacturing textile to prepare to uh, for uh military uniforms say. Was a big factory prepare leather, paper and other kinds of industry. And all this industry at one point works like forced labour, a lot of Jewish young people. And sure non-Jewish people were there. But many, many workmen were sent to fight against the Russians, the front. So a lot of young Jewish and young, non-Jewish people, young people fifteen years old was brought to this factory to work. So in this place is start to have some connection and to start to do all kind of sabotage. Say, if I recall, to slow down the production for example. To start to uh, to break some machines over there. And was very, very, uh, at that time very audacious actions. Was not maybe very big, we don't blow bridges, but we start a movement to organize the young people to fight against the Germany and this movement start to extend to non-Jewish. Some non-Jewish young people refused to go in the Army to fight the war along the Germans. So uh all kind of action. At one point was a discussion to start to do something about the German, and many nights, uh many Jewish young people and non-Jewish young people succeeded to go some place close. For example where the Germans keep their trucks, and to open the tanks, the gas tank and to put say some sand inside. And we discuss at one point to start to bring some small pieces of wood planks with nails and to put it some place where you know that the Germans uh vehicle will go through in some places. But was interesting because uh, many people at that time was divided I can say, how to act. Some, now, maybe appear very easy you know when you talk as far as the part but at that time to go in the street was a big deal to do. Uh to meet some people over there was very difficult because of curfew after six o'clock no Jewish on the street. And the Jewish has to wear some special sign, the star of the Juda as they call it. But uh at one point, maybe, this is interesting as I...(PHRASES MISSING)...but uh at one point uh many people thought its maybe better nothing to do because no matter what you are doing we exposed to something. And was a good feeling that later, uh sooner or later, the German would be defeated and all American Army will come to liberate our part or maybe Russian will be come first over there. So anyways they will come, so why to uh sacrifice our lives. But was a strong feeling among many people that have to do something. You know how many people died towards the front, how many people died in the camps, so many people feel to do to fight against the Germans and oh, the

people, the young people, I talking about young people, maybe not only young people. They don't care at that point about their life because they want to sacrifice to do something.

Q: OK. So you were part of this group. You were doing these things. Uh, what about your family during this time? How were you living?

A: That's a good question because uh this question applied to, let's put it this way, to the Jewish population. What happens to the Jewish population? And I have to make a short or long parenthesis about this. The Jewish situation in Romania during the war was different than in Poland, in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, in eastern uh western Europe even because of political situation, because the General Antonescu could become an ally to Hitler and he gave everything including a big army to fight along the German army. They kept, the fascist government in Romania, they kept some uh power in uh day by day administration of the territory, of the territory. And they was in charge to solve the Jewish problem over there. So they decided for many many reasons, don't to send the Jewish people to Auschwitz. To use them, to put them to work as a factory. Was more useful. They can because they took a lot of young people and not young people to put in the army to fight against the uh, along the Germans against the Russians. So a lot of factories, they don't have manpower, labor. So they want to use the Jewish people like a labor this work factory as they put a lot of people over there. Other Jewish people, let's say young people not only, was sent to build trenches, to build uh defense uh lines, at the front. So just speaking, most of the Jewish people were not sent to death camps. Was used to work. Some were sent in different camps in the territory which the German took from Russia, in the Ukraine, and maybe come back, maybe not. They start to arrest a lot of Jewish leaders and non-Jewish leaders and to put on uh, in prison. But was a small way to make some small, small amount of money. Because when they keep the people, the Jewish people, working in the factories, they give something. They pay like a very minimum, very minimum salary. I don't want to express how much was, but say enough to buy some piece of bread, was a bread twist or to buy some uh cornmeal or to buy other product which was if there was a market. And other interesting thing I guess, now talking with you it's in my mind, a lot of product came from the farmer who work with the land, and before the war the tradition was the farmer who has some land or farm, two, three, four, five miles from the cities, they come everyday in the city to market. Special market. Or they have their customers like to bring the milk, to bring the eggs, to bring whatever, the chicken. And I remember, say in our family, was a special farmer which come every day, before the war, every day they bring the milk in front of our door, some meat sometimes, fruits, vegetables, so was some relationship. When the war started this farmer, or some farmers, continued to come to the city to sell their products and many times they help the Jewish people. They say start to give some products. They don't have too much because some members of their families was taken in the army to go to the war, but uh they continue to, to work the land and they come with the less product to the market. But was some way to, to get something. And the Jewish people started to sell what ever they had to the people around. This only because big deal. They start to sell maybe their furniture, they some goods whatever. Maybe they have some gold. Maybe they have, whatever the Jewish people start to sell, to sell, to sell for nothing to, to buy the main product to uh, to survive. So was

some, some kind of connection to get some food over there. But the problem what important first to keep alive and good health because, if I recall, the public hospital closed to the Jewish patients say so the Jewish community start to organize some clinic and to use some Jewish doctors to give uh consultation over there. They start to, to get a way to get some medicine, but was more and more, become more uh uh seldom to get medicine. We can't get medicine, we can't get medical assistance to get an operation we need. So many people start even to die, to, to loose their health because of the conditions uh, medical conditions over there. And because they cannot feed the family, suppose the young people didn't have food. So the most important thing was to keep alive. Everybody everyday was the fight to keep, to keep alive. So was not, not very easy but was not enough to eat. But people survived. Was most important to, to have to drink, like water or you know, some, some food to, to, to eat over there. And maybe other thing I remember maybe could be a part of this survival, I don't know how right or wrong I am. The fascist government start to take the houses from the Jewish people. And this is, a Jewish family has a house is ten rooms whatever. Most of the time they took all the house, or nine rooms, and they let the Jewish owner to stay in one room over there. Five, six people in one room. And they give the rest of the non-Jewish people who occupy the room. Sometimes, being a small town, most of the houses, they have some garden around. So they start the Jewish people to, to uh to garden a little. To put some potatoes, to have I remember for some time, sometimes maybe some tomatoes to put over there. Some stuff to use, every possible to survive, to get some food over there. But the health is a problem and everybody was afraid every day somebody was, family would be taken to sent far away in special detachment, uh special uh formation to dig uh fortification and many people didn't come back. Was taken to say different part of the country to work in the uh forced labor in the factory. And many didn't come back. We don't know why. So uh the most important was to, to keep, to be alive and to be like your family to go through, through the war. And something else which probably could happened that I try to explain now is maybe some people are involved in and uh history research will go further. But we know in '42 starting, Germans start to, to be defeated on the Russian front and was a discussion about to open the second front by United States uh Army with uh Allies. So uh when uh the situation become worse and worse on the eastern front, Russian front, Zionists start to come back, and many wounded soldiers come back. They brought very bad feeling to their family. So non-Jewish family start to understand, and not before maybe they understood too that the war would be lost. So they suffered, the non-Jewish people suffered a lot, even if they are non-Jewish, they give their uh children to go to the war. They lost their children. Was tough for them even to, to get food over there. So many non-Jewish people start to, to, to help the Jewish people. Some neighbor would give sometimes say uh a bottle of milk to help, a loaf of bread, start to be some connection again because the people understood that on one hand the Jewish suffered, but they suffered too. It's not like to help the Jewish people, and maybe was, maybe, maybe was some opportunistic situation because they say this good, good relationship with the Jewish after the war. Who knows, you know. So uh the situation was tough, and many non-Jewish people took out many special fascist organization, took advantage, took all the Jewish business, all the Jewish factory, all the big Jewish house, or small Jewish houses, so the only hope of the Jewish people was to, to get out of the war and we know that there be

or due to the uh American Army or western army will come to liberate our territory or to the Russian army, start the offensive about the Germans over there. So every day, every minute start to follow the news, where is the front is moving. And I recall like now when was downtown, our town, was a big map of the Russian front showing how deep the German troops and others to penetrate in Russia. How they move from say uh eastern, uh western part of the Russia through Kiev to Caucasus to Moscow to Leningrad. And everyday in '41, the line of the front moving further and further. And we look at the map sometimes and we were very afraid. The further the German went, uh further our our hope was diminished, right. But after a while we knew the situation was changed. The Germans start to uh to be defeated. But the arrow was a sign on this map remains the same place. They didn't move to show how far they come back. So we start to, to find every way to get information, were we stand. Each day the front came closer, closer to our uh land, to this small city. So uh, the more we knew about the news, the uh Russian Army come closer to our border, the more we think that maybe we will escape. But we hope at the same time and everybody was, a lot of discussion, about the opening of the second front in Europe. And was a lot of discussion about American troops would come through the Greece at one point, to the, to open the second front. And to come to Greece, by the Romania to cut the German and probably the Russian to go toward west. But as you know, doesn't happen and the Russian came first.

Q: What happened to you? This is 1942, the tide is turning, the Germans are being pushed back. What are you doing?

A: Uh, well, at one point say in the '40's, '41, I was in the uh high school, Jewish high school, in '42. I start to be involved with a lot, with this organization who start to fight against the fascist regime. And in the '40, end of '42, '43 probably, I was sent to work in a factory. Textile factory. So I was a worker over there. And being over there I was involved together with other young people over there in kind of organization to sabotage the production and we try together to connect other people in other factories and other schools to start to act against the German occupation. But at one point, say I was over there and basically the night I came home. Some people were sent to work outside of the city. They have to stay to sleep in special barracks. But some people work in the town, had the permission to come home, which was a better situation. So basically I come home every night. I left the home in the morning, I came - but in eight, in uh '43, in the '43, in the fall of '43, part of our organization was discovered by police, by security forces. And we start to be followed. So we stop for a while our activities.

Q: What were you doing? You, you refer to our activities, you said sabotage. What were they?

A: Basically, we start at one point like I told you before to spread the news. One of the big activities, to spread the news, to try to find out, to write what is going on at the front. And to put in all kinds, to work on a way to transmit this news, small papers. We started in the factory to sabotage say the equipment, the heavy equipment. We started to dismantle some, some uh part of the equipment. Uh we start to cut some textiles over there. Uh we start to put to prepare outside the factory some planks, some wood with nails and we start to from

time to time to go close to some vehicle, German vehicle. Not German vehicle who went to the front, to put the sand or even to sabotage the tires, was over there. So this kind of uh activity was basically, and uh in '40, uh, was end of '43, the police discovered. They have an agent which introduced in our organization, and to the agent that we work with him, probably was wired to some people. He knew a lot so the spring of '44 they arrest uh five, six people in our organization and I was sent to the prison, to the jail. And I was interrogated. I was tortured. I was there beaten to, to give information about other people. Finally, we, was in the spring of '44 . . .

Q: Back up. What happened to you in the prison? I want, describe what happened.

A: OK. So basically I was arrested in the spring of '44. And I was in our local police interrogated. And after a while in the same time after two or three weeks, they decided to evacuate the police headquarters because the front start to move in '40, in the spring of '44 very close. And Moldavia was the first part to come under the Russian army. So they start to evacuate. The government tell uh offices, authorities. So decided to send us another place to finish interrogation and to prepare the paper to be uh, to court. So we was sent to a city call Gala_i, on the Danube River. And over there starts some interrogations and start to prepare based on declarations made by uh the agent, the informant agent against us in the court. Because we fight against the Nazi, you can't fight against a dictatorship, Romanian dictatorship. But meantime, the war start to be closer and closer. And they, try to remember, with some a lot of planes, war planes from Russia start to fly over the city and maybe some American flights. So every day, every night was some Allied movement, what you call it, air (air raid), air raids was over there. So one day they decide it's not safe. So they decided to send us, this group of young, was not only young people because we met other people over there, to move from this prison to other prison more safe and prepare to go to the court. Was a city called Ploe_ti. Ploe_ti, was a very famous because of oil fields over there. And one night they took irons, they put chains on our legs, and chain our uh arms, and sent to other prison. But in fact was not kind of regular prison, was a monastery as was transformed in a prison like this. And we stay over there waiting for the trial. Was in uh '44. And in the spring of '44, toward May '44, start the Russian, recall the Russian front was uh broken, the Russian victories against the Germans. They come very close. They, they took uh Kiev. They took Ukraine. They come close to the Romanian border, to Bessarabia, on one hand. On the other hand, the American aircraft start to bomb the Ploe_ti air fields over there. And from our place we saw many times the American planes coming bombing Ploe_ti. We were very happy any time we saw the planes bombing Ploe_ti. We knew that the war had come to the end. We don't know how close we are to the end of the war. So uh one day, in the spring, wait first of all, in Gala_i even, we was kept in every, everybody in different cell alone. Was cement on the floor, nothing, was a piece of wood or something we slept over there. Was a, how you call it, is a piece of uh, an opening which you can't make our need, put it this way, and once or twice a day they come to give some bread or some water, that's all. And was very, very bad. Most of the people become sick over there. Was, was the spring of '44 if I recall and we cannot talk to anybody over there. Any connections. The first time we talked to our people, our uh colleagues which we were together, was the transport

from uh Gala_i to Ploe_ti, was the train. We stand, we cannot sit because of our chains. We sit together, or stand together, will start to talk. Anyway, we become very sick when we come to Ploe_ti and Ploe_ti in comparison with Gala_i was a nice place because being a monastery we have the right like everybody there, to walk out in the garden over there. There was some place under surveillance but one hour per day or one hour every day. So was a big change for us. And, and this uh place, we could talk a little more free with other prisoners. Was not only political prisoners, how you call it, maybe they were criminals, maybe whatever they were, but they had some information about the war. And one day we find out that the Ploe_ti was bombed. We saw them very heavily that uh, uh front was again broken Moldavia as the Germans started to retreat. Uh through Carpathian mountains towards Transylvania in Germany. And then unexpected for us, one day, I saw the, we saw that the people over there who uh ran the prison start themselves to pack and to go. And they told us they would take us to our city back. So one day we were put together in a car and went to station, from station went to, by the train to our city, Bac_u. They could free us basically. Because the front is broken. Everybody takes care about themselves. We had some good luck. In other place, in other place, before the Russian came, I heard they killed the prisoners over there. On uh other places, they keep the prisoner to the last moment and the Russian troops liberated them. OK. So basically, basically, uh as the international situation, there is a war help us to be liberated from the prison.

Q: OK. Thanks. We're going to break. We change tapes now.

End of Tape #1

TAPE #2

- Q: Let's go back, Paul. We want to go back. You've taken us to liberation. We want to go back now. And I want to get a clearer picture of you in the middle of this group. Uh, tell me about the group. Uh, first of all, even before that, by 1944, starting between '42 and '44, things were becoming very difficult. (Yes) Were you, at what point did uh transports out of the town begin? Were there any transports? Tell me about that.
- A: At beginning of the war, if I recall, that's '41, and before the war even, when they start to issue a lot, many law against the Jews, one of the law, besides many, was that the Jewish we cannot move from one city to another. They are confined where they were. More important, in order to uh have the possibility, to monitor the Jewish movement and to, to, uh to get a better from their point of view, the fascist government, a better possibly to, to uh to keep control of the Jewish population, they order that all the Jewish people from small town around our town, for example, to go and to go, to come in the big city, like our city. So a lot of Jewish people, and there were thousands and thousands, left their small towns, which were 20, 40, 100 miles, and they were evacuated in our cities. They left everything. They come alone, with some carriage or they walk sometimes. And they have some relatives where they stayed, like us. We had some relatives came in our house and we, we gave a room and was uh two adult and two children. Another Jewish family gives their house and their rooms as a Jewish community center organized. So uh at beginning of the war, the Jewish people were around and concentrate in some big cities or small cities, but, in order to be easy to be controlled. And was interdicted to move from one place to other place. The Jewish people could not move.
- Q: When were the Jews, were Jews every deported from Bac_u to concentration camps?
- A: At beginning of the war, some Jewish were deported and some special camps, not in Germany, in the Romanian territory and later on, in uh the Russian territory. The fascist government build some camps in the Russian territory, in Bessarabia and other part of the Dniester, the river Dniester over there. But when they start to deport, they started uh some Jewish people was more uh known for their opinion against a, before the war, against the Germans. So they start to deport in non-Jewish uh people who belong to some uh political party like was say some social democratic party. Communist party. They brought all Communists which they know and start to deport and put in uh, in prison. Over there. Some was put, they took like, this is interesting now, they took as the beginning of the war, some hostages in our city including I remember my father. They took by random or some reason the police to be sure that at beginning of operations uh Jewish don't do something wrong to the whole territory authorities over there. They put in special uh special places. They took a school, if I remember, and put some, they call hostages, to take Jewish hostages and non-Jewish hostages. And they start to uh tease (ph) them. See I remember because my father was for two or three months, and we were not sure what at the beginning was their intention because after two, three months, they liberated some, liberated some people from the hostage places. And they took other hostages. And some hostages were even not liberated.

They were sent in un some camps again in the Romanian territory, in Bessarabia if I recall, and uh later on in uh Russian territory. And they organized some, some special prisons. They sent people over there, from these hostages. But after a while I, probably after six, seven months, I don't remember exactly, the system of hostages was stopped over there. So was not way to go from one city to the other. Some Jewish people were taken and sent to the factory, the local factory, and some were sent outside the city.

Q: What did you do? I want to know what you were doing at this point?

A: OK. Like I told at the beginning of the war, I was in the school, the Jewish school. The Jewish community organized a school, very or best thing could for young Jewish people over there to continue their education. And after a while in '40, '43 probably, beginning of '43, I was taken to work in the uh the factory. Like uh a mandatory labor work, they call. So I went over there and I start to work like a laborer, like a textile laborer. At the beginning they give a kind of training, how to use the textile equipment over there, very simple.

Q: How were you recruited into this underground group of yours?

A: This is interesting question. We have some uh, some friends even in the school. And one day one my friends, and there was a general system which worked probably, he start to talk to me more and more and talked about what represent the German occupation, what represent the German war, against become the Russian, how's our situation and start to uh convince me, I guess, we have to do something. And as the beginning, I can't say my friend didn't tell me about any organization. He want to convince me that he has to do something. The first stage of you know, uh, his work with me. I have to convince me to do something. And he talk, and he start to give me some books to read. Was other things at one point, organization, some, some German book, if I recall, _____, American book, Upton Sinclar, it's a book _____. OK. Uh we have some books by Russian, also Maxim Gorki they start to give us, uh some French also if I recall, Jaures, if I recall. So give some books, start to discuss, and after a couple of months, like very casual discussion right, uh he told, hey, if you agree that let's do something, let's do something, already there's organization you know, in school here. We are doing something. We can get together. A lot of people think I got it, we have to do something or the German. So uh in this way he introduce me to one other member of organization, but I want to tell you something here, because now I talking with you start to recall something. Because of dictatorship, because of the terror, was not an organization like today we say hey, hundred people. Let's make organization. Let's have a meeting, call a meeting. No. Was some rules, and one of the rules of the organization and on work on the fight against Germany is that one member has to know only other member they contact. So uh, if you were my contact, say to whom I talk, I know only you. And I got working directions, instructions from you only. And on uh my side, after a while, if I can bring other young men into organization, to convince other, he will be into step by step, and I will be his contact. So he will know only me. So this organization, we don't know exactly to a point exactly how many people there were or what exactly is doing. But at one point, he introduced me to the other, say one or two uh colleagues, who happened to be

colleagues, and to get together and to see what we can do. More specially against the Germans and happened two of these uh colleagues in the school, in the school, later on worked on the same _____ in the same factory. So when we went in this factory, textile factory, we start to discuss during break what, how to sabotage the work over there because they produce for the war. And how to maybe to talk to other friends in other factory. So first of all we start to slow down the work, and we start to talk to other people around. There are a lot of young people. We was out to tell them about organization, about anything. By talking about the tough situation of the people, the fact that the war have some big impact on our lives, to do something. And to convince them to slow down, don't work, don't get _____. So I remember two or three people in a couple of weeks start to become sick, start to, to, to go around a lot, start to walk, claims their equipment doesn't work. So all kinds of uh action in order to, to, uh reduce the production. And many of us start to at one point to cut some electrical wiring over there, which _____ to make mortars. Some parts we start to, to, to break some part of the equipment, so after a while there has to be a lot of uh maintenance, repairs, and there is not enough repair parts. So one of our objectives inside was to, to slow the production ...to our possibilities. The second was like uh political action I guess. You talk to the people to convince them that the uh fascist government is not good. That we have to do something, that we have to fight for liberation from German occupation. Was like uh political activity, to have more and more people to think like what we were thinking about.

Q: What composed this group? You said it was not just Jews only, and not just Communists only. Who was in the group? What kinds of people?

A: That's interesting, a matter of fact, like I told you, during the war exactly, we don't know exactly the components of this group because say I know one or two people, maybe four people, and other know other people. But basically what we find out that most of the groups was a conglomerate of people from different political uh what you call, uh beliefs. Was many people, Zionist young people, think to fight. Was Communist we sort have to fight. Was social democrat. Was other democratic members of all this party before the war started. So was like a united front to fight against the Germans. And the Communist uh representative, a big deal probably, after the war we find out and organize this group. They have an active part. But the most important at this point was to fight the Germans. In different ways. And uh many people thought that it is not necessary to fight. These others because there was a big danger. You expose your life. And was the feeling specially in end of '42 when we know, people know that the war will be lost by Germany, there's anyway, the Russian or American will come and liberate and Germany will leave. But the problem, as you know, when the German troop retreat, they kill not only Jewish people, other people. So if I don't be killed from nothing, the last day it could happen something over there. So many people think doesn't worth to fight. When to fight, because the liberation come anyhow. The most important to keep, to keep us alive. But other, many people thought is to do something, to give our contribution to the fight against the Germans.

Q: You were conducting all of this work slow down and destroying equipment and doing all of

these other things. Uh did you do any other kinds of sabotage-type of activities?

A: Oh, I remember other kind was I was involved was to hide them. They give me something to hide in my house. Some books, some materials, sometimes even I didn't know what's inside. But they told me they trust me to find a better way to hide than some materials. And I remember we work not only to hide to say to dig in the uh soil something, but to use some houses' walls or to, to take out some bricks and put back, and we have in our yard a very old car, uh and I don't know, the engine, took some apart and they put inside. And interesting thing was that we tried to uh have for this organization some people who have some connection with the government, some connection. So that we can use for information. And for example, I knew a former colleague, non-Jews, who was, his father was in the Army, and at one point we start to talk with him about, to meet him and to talk about the war, about the, what's going on, and he had some good feelings about our fight. He went, was ready to do something. So we use him, at one time to get him to hide in his house some materials. And he start to get some information from his father which was an Army officer of some type. He knew more what's going on at the front, what's going on in the town, and many times he came to me because when I start my high school he was my uh, my colleague on the bench, sitting next to me, so we were some friends. So we start to meet after the war a couple of times, and start to use his information, his situation to give information regarding the situation at the front, regarding the situation in town. And other thing interesting say at that time that I have to tell you was a girl in our town from a very high-class family, put it this way, was Jew. But during the war, like I told you, most of the houses was taken by the authorities and given to non-Jewish people or they put some Army commander or officer, give some room in the houses. So uh the family of this girl which was famous in the town, they have their own factory was taken but had the position, had in their house an officer of the Army, a high, high-level officer. So we start to talk to this uh girl. She was very nice girl. And she had a bad situation. She died many years ago in France. But she start to go from time to time inside the officer's room through some doors they have over there. He has two, three rooms in their house. And she start in one hand to use the radio to listen what's going on and she start to, to look through, through his papers and find what's going on in uh local political and army situation and basically, she didn't have very, very deep political conviction but she feels that she wants to help somehow the fight against the Germans to, to give her contribution here. So was a way to, to find more and more information what you want and to help and she, we gave to her to keep books and to give some other written material which were uh some leaflets for example I remember was at one point against the Germans, against the war. We distributed sometimes to some people this, and we hide it through her even in the officer's room. So this was a very, very interesting uh story you know. And uh, during the the end of the war, through her we find a lot of information.

Q: You hid your material in the officer's room?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: How did you do that and where did you do that?

A: Through this girl. I told you, they have a big, before the war, they have a big mansion. So the authorities took almost all the room and part of the apartment they give to this officer, high-rank officer, colonel say he was over there. And they would cut off communication first off between the rooms on one hand. On other hand happened, and happened many situation like this, you know many people don't recognize, some officer who were or had the rooms in Jewish houses, they know there was a front. They don't like to die on the war. So they started some sympathy for Jewish people and they start to talk to the people who, from where they took the house. They not treated like enemy. So with some of them, they have some, some kind of relation. They say good night. They (say) good morning probably. They have together the coffee from time to time. So for her, she, was easy to some extent to go in his quarters, in his rooms. So we give her some small books and small uh paper, some literature and she succeeded to go in his room. Not for long, to keep, to keep sometimes bathroom, sometimes even under his bed, something some places. So un we're very happy that she wanted to work and we know she was not a zionist, she was not a communist even. She was not, she was a rich girl before you know. She help the movement against the German.

Q: In your manuscript, you describe an incident when you were trapped in his rooms. Tell me what happened.

A: That's true, that story. Uh what happened. I have the connection with the girl. So I talk to her and she invited to her house to come to discuss, to bring some materials. She went to the same school like I went. So one uh day she told me that she wants to take me to officer's room to show me the room. Maybe I can find some more interesting over there because she was very quick. And _____ I did good or bad, I say, let's go together. So one day she told me come around five o'clock, afternoon was maybe, I don't recall, maybe Saturday or Sunday some. Her folks are out of town. So we, we went over there. But we discussed if something happened, we start, this was before we discuss her, if even her parents would come or somebody from house or we make believe that we are in love, we embrace one another, something, you know, friend. So she took me in officer's room one day. We started to look in his, on his desk, and after a while, maybe five, maybe ten minutes, I don't remember, somebody knocked at the door, and enter was an officer uh assistant or something to him with access. So was scared like death. So immediately start to embrace one another, start to kiss one another. So the officer start to yell, what you doing. You make love here, you are doing, here in the room. Making noise. And then he start to, to went out and to was a _____ and other rooms and her parents lived. What your daughter's doing here. There's a guy over there. So her daughter come or her parents came over in the room and started, what's going on. So they upset about their daughter and later about me because I am somebody which was _____. And we make believe that it's true, so finally went out and she had a rough time with her parents, and I stopped to see her in her house only this time, but was very funny situation over there. And she was a very, very uh courageous young uh lady, and nice lady, wasn't. Later on, after uh German was defeated and uh, uh

Romania become a free country again, for a while, she went to, to study and become a very good and very famous architect and later on she immigrated to France and in France she had a bad luck. She died of cancer. But was very sad, very sad. But always I was impressed, I'm impressed, when I think about a lot of people and about the young people from different situation, from different political point of view, _____ has to fight the German. And they don't care about themselves. They are ready to sacrifice. So uh was not selfish people. So many times maybe uh the young people, I was, this time, in our time, has to know what's going on and to think about what happened and to think that sometimes in life, maybe many times, it's not good to be selfish.

Q: In doing your underground work, what was the worst moment you ever had? The worst experience?

A: My worst moment, put it this way, was, (PAUSE) I cannot say the worst moment, was maybe was many moments. One was when being in police when was in our town, and the same time was other two, three people which were taken, and I was in a cell with a small window. During the night I couldn't sleep. But all of a sudden I, I heard some steps. And I saw two policemen bringing somebody, some corridors, and after a while I realized that the prisoner was one of my colleagues over there. And they brought him as kind of basement not far away from where I were, and start to beat him, talk to him over there. And I heard his screams and I heard his cries and I watched you know what happened over there and I realized, for me was the worst moment because probably was almost dead over there. But here, specially I knew like a comrade and like a nice person which I talked to many times and such a situation was horrifying. And was horrifying to understand what happened to his mind and his feeling. Was something which one is the worst moment. And the second worst moment I guess was for me when we were transferred from one prison, from Gala_i, to Ploe_ti. I told you before. We was put in a kind of prison, in a monastery. By this monastery was probably, I don't recall, six, seven kilometers, probably five miles, from Ploe_ti. We were in chains, and the hands cuffed, so from Ploe_ti station to the monastery was not any communication. We have to walk. So during the walk, during the night, was night, to start to walk and the monastery was on a kind of hill. We have to uh, road winding and climbing. After ten minutes, fifteen minutes, almost nobody could no more walk because the chain on the legs makes them uh, wounds, wounds you because. And they at one point start to bleed. And they couldn't walk. And almost I fall down. And other people fall down. At that moment, we stop for maybe a couple of seconds, and once the policemen start to come to us and say, go, don't, we have to, to get to the monastery. You have to give you a way to catch back our train, so don't care about you. So it was like the end of the world for us. Finally, one of uh our colleague have an idea to take some handkerchiefs or our shirt, I don't remember, to make a knot to our uh chains and to tie it to our belts so the chain doesn't fall down on our ankles here. So we try to do this for a while, but again start to fall down. So the worst moment probably, we walked two hours say, close to two hours, but I thought was eternity. And then a funny moment happened when we went to this uh monastery. They have a big barrack. Was not inside the monastery, was outside. The kind of place where they kept probably some uh equipment to take uh care about the land. And they push inside.

Inside was other prisoners. One near other one I guess. And in the middle of this big barrack _____ was big barrel (ph). People make their needs from this barrel. And dirty around. And we were in there. Don't excited right now. I cannot believe this maybe. Was that people, we couldn't breathe, couldn't do anything. But only very small space, space to lay down was this barrel. So everybody jump to lay down and to put their head on the wall of the barrel. I cannot tell you what feeling, when you feel happy, if you can say that, because we, we don't walk. Was end of the _____. On other end, where you were over there, maybe wasn't like you were coming over there because they _____ us. Was how you call, bad, bad bad situation, but was I can see you meet him. He give you instruction. They say yes. I say no. They say start to beat me in front of him. And finally, we, he indicate (ph) for me that I know him, they try to bring this third one. Say they brought the third one to witness against me, which I know. And I, I was surprised because the third was not an agent, was other colleague, was _____, was my connection. He made the declaration before that he knew me. So he brought him to recognize me in front of the policeman. He come in front of me, was two people, police, in empty room. You recall _____ him. We look one another eyes. And say no, I don't know who this is. I was, to you made a declaration against him. You beated me to the death. They start to beat him again, in front of, know him. No, I don't know him. This was most, most emotional part of which I remember like now, you know, whatever.

Q: Did they beat you?

A: Yes. They use all kinds of system to, to put you down, to _____, to beat on uh on legs and other parts of the body. And other was times they manage you to kill or to, to uh arrest your parents. This was other system to put pressure on you. And you know what happened. Was very, very afraid. But I can't say, maybe good luck or bad luck that we were caught at the end of the war. So when the situation of war was clear for many people, local people, authorities, they start to evacuate and they know that the German cannot win the war. They couldn't win the war. There was already change and retreat toward Carpathians , to Transylvania, to Berlin.

Q: Did you parents move away?

A: My parents were in the same town and they stayed in the same town.

Q: They were not arrested with you?

A: No. No. No. No. They suffered a lot you know. And uh they tried the best they can to help me, but there's nothing to do. To keep hope.

Q: How did you meet this Traian that you describe in your manuscript? Who was he and how did you meet him?

A: Uh, I mentioned manuscript about this Traian or Trane. I don't know how to pronounce

because was a very interesting person, very strange. Was a mixture of good and bad. But was uh like an interesting story, OK. So being this guy, young man in 40's, I remember. He was young guy in the same town I know. I remember like now that his father was an invalid from the first war and saved some license invalids from the war, first war, to sell cigarettes, you know. Tobacco shops to have, to give a way to make a living for the, who are veterans. So I know about him. I know him on the streets, maybe on the school. So one day in '40 when the Iron Guard become very powerful, '40, I guess '40, maybe beginning of '41, I saw this guy Triane, his Iron Guard uniform on the street. Green uniform, military uniform. And he starts to yell and to beat some people who think they were Jewish. And for a while, at the end of the '40, maybe beginning of '41, the Iron Guard was part of the government of the dictatorship of General Antonescu, was most extremist right say wing, fascist wing. And some places they put their people in charge of the security forces. The police we call them. So this young man become the chief of security, of police in our town. Iron Guard security. OK. After a while, when uh Iron Guard was defeated by General Antonescu. It's a long story. Many run out of the country and many disappear, there's a fight on the streets. It's a long story, don't want it in details, but I didn't hear anything about same person called Traian. When I was arrested, and moved from our town to Gala_i to prison, was by, moved by a uh truck, I saw the truck with other people was this guy Traian. After say three years maybe. And I was surprised what he's doing with the people who fought against the German, because a part of Iron Guard. I didn't know, I couldn't ask him. Was dark, we went to the prison. After Gala_i, we was transferred to this monastery where was more free, so we start to talk between them. Talk to him, to talk to other people. And I asked one other uh colleague who was with me in organization, what's doing this guy here because he was an Iron Guard, and we fought against the Germans. And let's tell you his story shortly. And looks first of all, he was condemned to death by uh fascist organization being an Iron Guard leader, and probably he killed somebody or something happened, I don't know. So he have a bad sentence, and in order to avoid, he ran out of the town and later on come back and he was hiding with a neighbor who happened to be Jewish guy. He's former roommate or colleague or something like that. So this Traian who was Iron Guard security chief and has a death penalty on his head was hiding, by in a Jewish family. After a while, one of the sons of the Jewish family was involved to some extent in this organization, anti-fascist movement and they told to one of connections that they know they hiding this guy over there to him. So one day they decided let's use him somehow because he's not Jews uh, and let him try to go to send him to some camps in Russia with Jewish people, non-Jewish people, communists, not communists, to help them, to send some money, some, some uh packages, some products or some grocery or some clothes. So he agreed to go again like a what you call underground to help the anti-fascist forces, put it this way. So he went a couple of times to what those days was occupied by Germans to help, not to help, to uh transmit some money, to transmit some food, some clothes, something to the people that was in camp. One night before uh probably we was arrested, he decided to go out from hiding, probably to go in uh special house to have some lady relationship, with some prostitutes or some bordello or something. And he went over there and some policemen around recognize him, so they put him under surveillance and they follow him, and they follow where he went. So the police, the fascist police start to survey the house and finally

they decided to arrest some people of the house, including him. So he went together with this group and our group when all was the same time to the police. And he, he was again put under trial and put uh inquire and put on the investigation, not like Iron Guard, but like helping the anti-fascist movement. But he was all the time afraid that he was put there because he was an Iron Guard, so after a while we start to talk and I start to talk to him, and he told very vague, not in detail, that he knows his past, he regret it, make a big mistake, and he want to pay somehow and want to help the movement. And probably my feeling he was a little opportunistic. He knew, he was smart guy. He knew that the situation would change anyhow, so it's better to have good relationship with uh anti-fascist groups. So after uh the German left and uh become independent uh country again if I can say, he was in charge for a while like security chief, security force in the same town Bac_u but now like presence of communists. And happened he married a Jewish girl. But finally after a while, put it this way, was a lot of uh discussion, a lot of uh problem, the relation with others, not only with him, Iron Guard people and uh fascist people who converted during the night to be democratic, to be communist and to help the communists. So he was, we found this true, expelled from communist party and take out of his job and sent some place in our small town to work like in accounting. But uh was pretty interesting story about him and uh how some people are liberate during the war and before the war, how some people change the color of their shirt. Because I met in my life many, many kinds of people. Some people have some convictions, something. And the keep their conviction, right or wrong, to the end of their life. Didn't want to change. Other, according to the circumstances, feel more safe for them to, to change their convictions. To say I'm sorry for yesterday, but now I'm changed. I'm with you. So this happened many times and even now days you see many places over the world the same, the same story. But was interesting you know how they were alright, the people were alright.

Q: You were in prison. Take it back to when you were in prison. Were you ever afraid that your comrades under torture would tell what they knew about you?

A: Yes, I was afraid, and specially was afraid about two guys which we worked together. But uh one, like I told you, he recognized _____ but when he was brought in front of me, he denied. And he continued to be a symbol of the human being because at this point he saved not only his life, or may be my life, and I cannot, cannot tell what was my, my strong feeling, how my, I cannot you what means this to me, absolutely know what many people under the force, they give everything. They talk. They, you know. Other people, they keep their belief and their ideas you know. That's not easy way. So not many people probably. So.

Q: Let's take it to the end of the war now. You have been taken out of prison. You are marched to where? The bombs are falling and you are being marched to where?

A: At the end of the war, a couple of months, you know, the end of the war happened different places at different stages, you know.

Q: For you.

A: What happened from this place in prison in Ploe_tî, we were put in train and bring to our town Bac_u again, and probably, I don't recall--maybe was July, or July or close to August, maybe; it was '44. And was to station, the police station. The police station looked to us, and said you are free now but you don't have the right to move from city to the city. Every week we have to report to us here, that you are here. So we went home. But the situation in '44 say in July in Moldavia was changed. Most of the authorities start to leave the town which _____ leave and the front was very close, and every, basically we stayed home. We didn't go out of the home, no where to go. People are afraid. And we start to hear the sounds of the artillery from Moldavia--from, say, city of Ia_i [Ger: Jassy], or closer--because the Russian army start to come closer and closer. So I remember like today, in the beginning of August, maybe middle of the August, all of a sudden in the morning, a big noise on the street again, like the same strange noise like in '39 we heard when the Polish troops came from Poland and we saw the war started. It's interesting. And we went out, again, in our pajamas or whatever it was over there, and saw a lot of German troops running toward the edge of the city which goes towards Transylvania, Carpathian mountains and local troop, and I saw a local authorities which I know start to run. And everybody starts the Russians out on the bridge, the Russians out on the bridge. Was a big river, a bridge a couple of miles. So after a couple of hours everything was uh silent. Some, only sounds of uh artillery. A fight was over there and nobody dared to go in the street. Nobody was able. So was a couple of hours from the morning, early morning till afternoon was a ghost city. Everybody was afraid, and all of a sudden around four o'clock, probably five o'clock, was some noise and somebody start to tell some Russian troops are uh close to our city. People went out to the bridge, only bridge which come from Ia_i to our city. So we saw the Russian uh troops over there coming. And everybody start on the street to go, and everybody, this is the true, start to cry and start to kiss one another. The German is gone. The fascist is gone. So this is a kind of liberation that you have.

Q: What did you do? What happened to you after liberation?

A: After liberation happened many things in our town. Understand this. Number one, we come together, a group of people like was together, fought together in Germany, in group, only gathered together and we went to Jewish community center. And then we find people are already over there which were some representative I guess of some political party, some communist party, and they start to organize the life. Was the first thing they told us to do, to go immediately and to clean, because it's more difficult to say, because the same time we saw the Russian uh troop, Russian army goes to the city day and night. And a lot of uh wounded soldiers coming back and tanks and horses. The horses that was taken for the Russian soldiers, but was like uh a big mess over there. A lot of uh garbage everywhere. And everybody was afraid there could be some epidemic immediately. So they told us, they told me, you be in charge now for next two days to clean the streets. I don't know what to do, you don't have anything. I don't know. Take, you have here ten people, or twenty people. Go and take whoever you can and find some carriage and start to, to grab the garbage. So we did for a couple of days all kinds of tricky things to get some garbage, to

throw away in the river. There's a river across over there. And then other things what happened which I remember, start some fires in the city. Somebody put some fire, some buildings in downtown. Up to now I don't know who or how, it was very curious. But was some fires and was not uh firefighters over there because they were evacuated because the Russians came. So we start to, to fight this uh fires over there, days and nights over there. To bring water and to try uh hoses. One of the first activities we did over there. And uh then we start with some kind of administration they start to put together. And this happened in all the part of the Moldavia when the Russian came. Immediately the communist was in control as they start to organize the administration. And other thing interesting is, again, now is history, uh during the war was a lot of prisoners from Germany, from Romania, from other country who fight against the Russian, so Russian organize this prisoner, some special army, most of them. I don't know. And they make like a Polish army who was trained in Russia and probably German army who was, and the Romanian army. And when they come to Romania, they put some people from this uh Romanian army which trained in Russia in administration of the territory. And they asked to help the administration, all kinds of small things related from clean the street to transportation to guide the transportation, all kinds of, postal service to start was cut something over there.

Q: You brought some pictures with you. Let's take a look at a couple of them. We have about four minutes. Um. The one on top is a particularly interesting one. Let's take a look at the one on top.

A: OK. Can I look here. (Technical conversation). Now here is a picture, if you don't know. We like to go to our neighbors, a lady, our neighbors. Always she has nice dogs and horses over there. And here, that's my sister Rose, my brother Mike and myself here. That's before the war, many years. But what, looking through this picture I remember how happy we were to go to our neighbors because they have nice dogs and horses and sometimes a carriage and they took us around the corner you know to give us a ride over there.

Q: You have one at the end of the war, celebrating - well, that one's at school. Let's see that one.

A: Yes, now here is a group of students, colleagues, probably in '37, '36 (technical conversation), '36, '37 and we liked to go to some uh colleagues homes, to stay, to have tea, to play over there. And one day we get here for a birthday over there. And most of the people who are here, I show later in a big picture, went to this Jewish school organized by Jewish community center and many are now in the United States, some are in Israel. A few probably are still in my town, and I don't know the fate of other ones.

Q: You have one of your parents in there.

A: Yes, I guess this right. This are my parents, here. My mother Maria and my father Leonid. I guess this photo picture was taken immediately after the war. And they look nice as my parents. They are happy, and they tried to give us a very honest and good education and I

learned a lot about life from my parents, especially from my father.

Q: You have a photo there celebrating at. Do you want to show that one ____?

A: Well, it's not here. Where's the big one? With all the students. Could you take this?

Q: OK. You had one celebrating at the . . .

A: Oh no. Here. OK. Now here is an interesting uh picture I guess. When we finish, probably this one is in '43, the high school. The high school was a tremendous experience. Sometimes we didn't have any electricity, didn't have any heat. We didn't have to eat you know, the lunch. But we went to the school. Because . . .

Q: OK, we have about thirty seconds. That one's at school. And you want one more, the one you have at the end of the war.

A: At the end of the war, we have a big party here to celebrate our liberation and like a large party, we have drink, we dance and some friends of ours are here. And . . .

Q: Paul, thank you very much.

A: It was my pleasure to be with you. It's very tough to talk about the past so far away. But I tried.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Q: OK. Now tell us what these are.

- (1) Some of my colleagues in our class when uh we finish the high school, the Jewish school organized by Jewish community center. And each one went uh his or her way in his life and everybody is different places all over the world right now.
- (2) This picture represents our class when we finish the high school at the Jewish community center. Was a very tremendous experience to go through this school when you don't have electricity sometimes. You don't have heat. The teacher change very often as they were taken to concentration work or they were taken to labor camps, they change. But always we have some teacher to teach us. And.
- (3) These are my parents. The picture was taken after the war.

(TECHNICAL CONVERSATION)