

Tape four, side one:

JF: This is tape four, side one, of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler, on November 10, 1982, with Josey Fisher. You said that Ehrenburg's account of *Babi Yar* was one of his first accounts?

MA: Yeah, it was, what I read about it. Of course what I read, I don't if this... And the Russians were very nice, because the guy who was in charge over us, he saw to it that I get a *Pravda* every time when it came.

JF: So these articles appeared in *Pravda*.

MA: In *Pravda*, yeah.

JF: As you look back over the information that Ehrenburg was able to put into these articles, were they fairly complete reports, with what you know now of what was going on?

MA: Well...

JF: Or do you think that some of it was kept out?

MA: Well, there is...how do you know what is a complete report? But, his articles make me realize that Stalin did me a big favor, that he took me out from Europe.

JF: Were his articles balanced in their reporting, or do you think he was required to put a Russian slant onto his reporting?

MA: I don't think he has to put. That's what he saw was enough.

JF: He didn't have to slant it.

MA: He didn't have to do, no, he didn't have to exaggerate nothing. And I don't think, you see, it's only one person's...

JF: Observation?

MA: Opinion. Observation, I mean. And that's what there, that's what did go on there, I don't think anybody will be able to give a complete report.

JF: During your time there, did you meet any other of the Russian writers, or actors? Any of the artists who were kept away from the cities during your stay in Siberia or the [unclear]?

MA: No, I, you mean any celebrities? No. No, we were, I wasn't in any big city, you know. No, I didn't meet Ilya Ehrenburg either. I just read his articles. And a matter of fact, till I read Ilya Ehrenburg's articles, a *Pravda* paper wasn't so interesting to read at all. All of what it was is a report from this factory and from this, how much they work, how much this and that's about all. There was nothing, and you know, the Russians, in the beginning they were thinking that we were very, very big fans of their Communism. Because when we came to Siberia, there was bookstores, the bookstore there. So all what you could get is the history of the Communism, in Russian. The volumes very nicely, you know, Lenin's, well, Lenin's work and Stalin's work and Engels and Marx and this. And we bought them all up. They were very reasonable. They were very cheap, comparing, you

know? Because they were not on the black market. Everything what was on. And they were thinking they were reading it till they find out what we're using it for!

JF: What were you using it for?

MA: Toilet paper! [laughs]

JF: Oh, that's a wonderful story!

MA: When they find out what we're using it for, they didn't want to sell us anymore.

JF: Oh, oh, that's wonderful. So, tell me what happened in '46. You said you were in Stalingrad until that time, or near Stalingrad until that time.

MA: That was near Stalingrad.

JF: Yes, in the Engels territory.

MA: Well, we, I got married later. In September of '46 I got married.

JF: This is somebody that you had known? Or...

MA: I had known her before the war.

JF: She was from your hometown?

MA: No, next town, but they were all the time in Siberia with us. She was all the time in Siberia with us. I knew her, and that's what I married and she was a distant cousin. I guess, I don't know. Her mother and my mother were maybe the sixth cousin or something like it. I don't know. A very distant cousin. And I married that time. And...

JF: Could you have a Jewish wedding?

MA: Yeah. I had a Jewish wedding and...

JF: Could you have had one before the war was over?

MA: Yeah, but who did want to get married? [laughs]

JF: People didn't want to get married.

MA: No, the people didn't. Nobody, no, they didn't want to get married. And I'll tell you something else. You could have everything if they don't catch you. What do you mean a Jewish wedding? You mean to a Jewish caterer or a...?

JF: [chuckles] No.

MA: Of course there was no, no rabbi either. There was no rabbi.

JF: There were no rabbis?

MA: No. We don't need it a rabbi. We performed ourselves, what a Jew should be. And my brother-in-law performed the whole thing. You see, I performed a wedding once. They, but...we went to that city hall and, to the Russian city hall, and over there they put you a stamp and...

JF: And you're married.

MA: Hmm?

JF: You're married.

MA: And you're married. Over there it cost, five *ruble* it cost a marriage license and 25 *ruble* cost a divorce! [laughs] A divorce is much higher than a wedding.

JF: But there weren't many marriages before the end of the war? People were too...

MA: No, I cannot recall it.

JF: They were too skeptical of the outcome of the war? Or it would have made life more difficult to have been married?

MA: There was no reason. The life was very,... and besides, you had no desire for sex even. You had no desire for sex.

JF: What do you think the reason was?

MA: You [pause] I don't know if I can bring it out in English for you, but you get so knocked down, you know, the feeling, the feeling is, I had the same feeling when two guys came when I was staying in the store, with guns, and demanded the money. I had the same feeling in the stomach, like the stomach drops, you know? It's a, I'm nobody. You know, who am I? A flicker of his trigger and I'm dead. You know what I mean? And another time I got a feeling. Once I came and opened the store and during the nighttime they robbed me, you know?

JF: You're talking about here in Philadelphia?

MA: Yeah, here, yeah. I came with this. I had the same feeling, you know?

JF: The fear.

MA: My... the fear. My stomach turns. You know, here things happen, nothing what you can do, you know what I mean? We were in the mercy of a bunch of guys what they run, what they did with a, if you came ten minutes late to work, you know what I mean, they could arrest you for it. And they did arrest you! If, the first day if you came late to work, they give you 6-25, which it was nothing, you know what I mean? You know what 6-25 is? For six months they took off twenty-five percent of your wages. Which it didn't mean...but it meant a lot like in points. Because the second time if you're late, they give you six months there. And usually, people who got two, three years jail, they survived. And this six months, very seldom anybody survived. Then they go tell me why.

JF: You mean if people were jailed for two to three years, they would live.

MA: They would live. They got out later during, the time came and they get out. And these who got six months, very seldom anybody survived. I don't know. I, the...one thing I can figure it out, the guy who got six months was thinking, "Eh, it's only six months." He didn't, you know what I mean?

JF: He didn't prepare himself maybe?

MA: And he didn't prepare himself, that's right. You know what I mean? And these who got a couple of years, they, right away they start thinking of survival. You know, you know, when people died there, you know what they say? "He's dead, he's dead a long time. He just didn't have no strength to fall down." I remember, with my sister, we, I met once my sister. I remember I went home from work. She says, "I stopped and they said that Moshe Reizenberger, [phonetic]" a friend of ours, he used to work with her. She says, "I went to visit him and," she says, "I think he will be all right." I say, "What makes you think

he is all right?" You see, she, I met her, she was there ten minutes ago and I was later there, and when I was there he was already dead. He was already dead. But she says, "I think he will be all right." I say, "What makes you think he will be all right?" She said, "Because he has an appetite." I was laughing. "An appetite?" I said, "What do you mean?" Because she was with the boy and the boy had a piece of bread and he was looking on the piece of bread. So she took the piece of bread and gave it to him. She says, "In a minute he finished it." I say, "Well, he is not all right any more." You know what I mean? It's, if you live a life like this, you don't care much about, yeah, I don't think anybody get married. They get married, the husband and wife, they didn't live like others. They didn't care. No, it's a...

JF: So when things relaxed after the war was over, you were not as anxious? You were not as worried?

MA: Well, once we got out from Siberia life was a little easier. You know, it was already... But not enough to get married. [chuckles]

JF: And when you got married, in September of '46...

MA: September of '46.

JF: You were still there. You were still in [unclear].

MA: Oh, we knew already we're going out.

JF: But you knew you were leaving.

MA: Oh, sure. We had already all the papers ready, all the this.

JF: O.K.

MA: We knew soon as spring came, we, because they wouldn't send us, in winter they cannot send, because the, you would freeze in the boxcars. And they sent us again with boxcars.

JF: So...

MA: But in the boxcars, you see, instead 35 people, we were between 18 and 20 people in the car.

JF: Oh, that's luxurious!

MA: That was first class!

JF: First class! So what month was it, then, that you left?

MA: We left in the end of April.

JF: The end of April of...?

MA: '46.

JF: Wait, you said you married in September of '46.

MA: September, September of '45. I'm sorry.

JF: And, oh, O.K. I'm sorry.

MA: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. September of '46 I wasn't there already. You know.

JF: Oh, O.K., so you married September of...

MA: September of '46 I was already in Germany.

JF: O.K., so you married in September of '45 and then the end of April of '46...

MA: They sent us back.

JF: You went back where? Where did they send you?

MA: They sent us to Poland. And we could get off wherever we want in Poland.

JF: Where did you go?

MA: I got off in Krakow because I was from Krakow.

JF: And what did you do when you got there?

MA: When I got off from Krakow, first of all, you see, the main reason what I got off in Krakow, because my sister was in Krakow and I was thinking I will...

JF: You hoped your sister was still there.

MA: I hoped I will find her. And I came in Krakow, and I lived in the, in a public house. Was put up for us a public house. And there was right away I had to register to the Joint Distribution. They supported us. It was right before Passover at that time. We got *matzos*. We got wine. We got food. Gee, it was a different world. And I start looking for the sister. It was no [pause] No, I got, I find a girl what a neighbor. And she told me the last time they, she heard from them is they were on the Plaszow Ghetto, in a ghetto they were. But later I heard the Plaszow Ghetto was all killed out. They killed them all out there.

JF: So, your sister and her husband?

MA: And two children.

JF: Two children, as far as you know, died there.

MA: Yeah.

JF: In the ghetto?

MA: In the ghetto. And later, my wife became pregnant.

JF: In Krakow? When you were living in Krakow?

MA: I find out in Krakow, yeah. So I was thinking, I have to get away. As long as I see Russian soldiers, I have to move on.

JF: What was the attitude of the native Polish population towards you?

MA: Very hostile. See, they were, "Oh!? You're still alive?" If you saw some, "You're still alive?" And not only this. And they kept on killing people. We had to live like together to protect ourselves. You couldn't go, they were very hostile, very, very, they were worse than the Germans even. Because the Germans wouldn't do it if they wouldn't have orders to do it. You know what I mean?

JF: But the Poles would have?

MA: And they did it for pure pleasure. They were worse than anybody else. If we, I don't know, some people asked me when I had, in the store, when the Polish, you know, when the Solidarity was starting, "What do you say about the Polish people? They suffered so much." I didn't want to say nothing but [laughs]...

JF: It's hard for you not to remember what they...

MA: I haven't got a place in my heart to feel sorry for them. Oh no. Sorry to say it, you know, it's a sad thing. I love the Russian people. You know, when I heard, I read in the paper a news that the Volga got polluted, my heart was aching. I felt sorry for the Russian people. When I heard that the Polish people get mistreated, it doesn't mean

nothing. I wouldn't rejoice, because you don't rejoice on nobody who is in trouble, but I don't guess a...

JF: Can you give me, excuse me, can you give me any specific examples of things that happened to you after the war, in Krakow, with the Poles?

MA: Yes I will. First of all, I attended every couple day a funerals what they got killed by the Russian, by the Polacks. But they, and... we had to...you know, live in groups and to keep watch for the Polacks not to come in and attack us. And I finally, got a contact to cross the border to Czechoslovakia.

JF: You had to smuggle into Czechoslovakia?

MA: Yeah. To smuggle. We paid a guy.

JF: And who went? You and your wife?

MA: Me and my wife, yeah. She was pregnant.

JF: And alone. I mean, none of your other family?

MA: Well, I lived separate. No, and my, you see, I was already a family by myself.

JF: Yes, yes.

MA: I was a family by myself. My sister lived with her children and we lived not far from each other. And my sister sent away the children. All the children she sent them away. The three small children she sent to, with a, you see, there was a, the *Haganah* operated there. And they took the children to smuggle out from Poland and they took them to Czechoslovakia. And I knew they are in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, but I didn't know where. And so the three small children were in Czechoslovakia. The two, the son went from the *Agudah*, from a religious group they sent him to Germany, to Frankfurt. Now was left my sister and her husband and two children, and later they worked out legal papers. My brother-in-law had a sister in Paris, so they worked out legal papers and they went to Paris much later than I went.

JF: But you and your wife went to Czechoslovakia.

MA: Czechoslovakia. That was in...

JF: When?

MA: In... August.

JF: In August of '46.

MA: '46.

JF: And did you stay there for a while or did you move on?

MA: The end of July was, summer, the end of July there. Hmm?

JF: Did you stay there for a while?

MA: One second. Listen to it. So we were a whole group, about 20 people, we got together, and paid, we didn't know how to go or how to cross it not to be caught. Because if the Polish border guard catches us, we weren't afraid for the Czechoslovakian border guard, because they welcomed us. They knew we're running away and they welcomed us, you know what I mean? But for the Polish border guards, they would put us

in jail. So, there had to be a guide. And the guide was taking, he take us. And he took us, we came already on the Czechoslovakian border and we saw the borders and they, a couple of bunch, he had set up a couple, a bunch of more guys, with machine guns, to give them away everything. If not, they will kill us. And a lot of people got killed that way. And we didn't know how they got killed because they find them killed on the border. We were thinking that they tried to cross by themselves. So we gave them everything and the Czechoslovakian guards, the Czechoslovakian border guards start hollering for them to no let us go. They didn't want to listen, and they even shot to death the Polacks. So, finally we give them everything and we can...[laughs]

JF: Without anything.

MA: Without anything. Here sits my wife with her stomach that was bulging.

JF: That was your fortune. That's all. That's it.

MA: We came to Czechoslovakia. Right we came to Czechoslovakia the *Haganah* was waiting for us. And we had so much joy at that time, to see the *Haganah*. And they took us to Prague. I came to Prague. We were kept in a camp, and we were said in the afternoon, we will march on farther. So, from now on I didn't have to do nothing. I wasn't in the guidance. So I asked for permission, because I knew my sister's children are in Prague—to go and find them. “Where are they?” I say, “I don't know.” [laughs] So, anyhow, they told me but to be back by around 3:00, because on 3:00 we will move on. So I went, and where do you go? So I find somebody, a Czech, and I told him, I didn't, I couldn't talk Czech. But the German language during the war, you know, it got popular. In German I talked to him, “Can you recommend me where the Yiddish quarter is...?” And they know Jewish. So he showed me, “Here lives a *Yid*, a Jew, go in there.” So I went in there. So he told me where the Jewish Quarter is and I went there. I went in the Jewish Quarter. I still, I didn't know, and I saw a bunch of kids marching, you know, girls marching. And one of the kids gets up from the group and the teacher runs after her. And she runs and she runs and I was thinking I'm going to catch her and turn her back to the teacher. And she jumps on me! That was my sister's younger daughter!

JF: Oh!

MA: She recognized me! So the teacher later understood. She apologized. She was going back to her. And she took me, the teacher with the whole group, she took me to the boys where they are, and I spent a couple hours with them. And the little boy had a *siddur*. He has an extra prayer book. He gave it to me. I still have it. [laughs]

JF: Who gave you the prayer book?

MA: The little boy.

JF: The little boy.

MA: My sister's boy, yeah. Yeah, he says he, somebody gave it to him.

JF: That was the first one you had seen in a while?

MA: The first one I'd seen in, in fact a couple months. Yeah, so later I had to come back. When I came back they already were ready to go and my wife didn't want to

go, with her stomach. She says she will wait for the husband! [laughs] So everybody waited. When I came, we start right marching. And we went at that time to, we crossed the border to Austria. And in Austria we went to Vienna. You know, and you know, these was these transit camps, you know, where we were staying. And groups were coming and going. And you know, the first thing we came, you looked on the walls. Everybody signs a name, and you find out who went through there. It was like a information center.

JF: Sure.

MA: And I signed my name and less or more what I know of where I go, I marked down there. So that was our...

JF: Communication.

MA: Our communication. You find out from the first, since we came to Czechoslovakia this started.

JF: Who established these transit centers?

MA: The *Haganah* I think.

JF: The *Haganah*?

MA: I think it was under the leadership of the *Haganah*.

JF: And what were...

MA: And the HIAS, the Jewish organizations, yeah. It was supported by the Joint Distribution.

JF: By the Joint.

MA: Oh sure.

JF: And were these buildings that had been sort of appropriated for this purpose, or were they built...

MA: No, they were, you see, during a war is a different story. In Vienna we were staying in Rothschild's Hospital. Used to be a Rothschild's Hospital we used to go. We were staying there. And mostly was the place where we were staying was army.

JF: Army barracks?

MA: Army barracks, *Kaserne*, what they called it. *Kaserne* army barracks was there mostly.

JF: So what happened when you went to Vienna? Were you there for very long or...

MA: No, they took us to Salzburg later, a couple days, I think, a couple days. And I was very, you know, I say, you know, my wife's stomach was the fortune. Because as a pregnant woman they treated us better. We get better treatment. We get better everything, yeah. They took it under consideration. So...

JF: How did you travel? Excuse me, how did you travel between these cities?

MA: With trains and we walked all the time, a lot of the time when we had to cross the border. We had to cross the border. We had to be quiet. We went through West Germany, you know what I mean? It's in one place when we went from Vienna to, you know, Salzburg, a shorter. I don't know, somehow we had to, we did walk. We went in the

night time and crossed the border. But anyhow, in Salzburg we were I think three weeks we were in Salzburg, and, till they worked out the papers. And later, and when we came to Salzburg, they put us on a train. It was already American soldiers. The American soldiers took us over and they took us to Ulm.

JF: How do you spell that?

MA: U-L-M., Ulm, Ulm.

JF: Which was where?

MA: In Bay-, in Germany.

JF: And what was there?

MA: They took us to Ulm. In Ulm they put us in a DP camp. We arrived to Ulm in September.

JF: Of 1946.

MA: September. My boy was born September 21st. We arrived the 19th.

JF: He was born the 24th?

MA: 21st. I think a couple days earlier we arrived. There was one boy born, as soon as we arrived one boy was born. The same day we arrived. [laughs] He was the second boy born there. And they put us in the Sedan. It was an army camp there. And we organized right away a militia. And I was between the militia there. We, you see, we still weren't, to see if somebody is after you, they want to kill you. They want...

JF: You were still frightened.

MA: Still, still in with this. And we kept the gates closed, you know. And everybody who got in, we checked. And I remember I was, I got off duty. I was staying on the gate and I was in the house there, you know. And the guy that was right with the first week when we came in, we came there Thursday. And Saturday, Saturday we kept the gate closed completely. Closed completely only you couldn't go, drive in only a gate open. So, and a guy was staying on the gate holding, you know, a guard. So he calls me out. "What's this?" A jeep was blowing the horn and he wants to come in. And he didn't let him in. So he calls me out, "What's this?" He says, he says he is a rabbi. I say, "A rabbi? Why does he come on Saturday?" [laughs] I couldn't understand! I couldn't imagine a rabbi to Saturday to drive a car? So I go over to him and he hardly could talk a Yiddish and he talked a little German. I said, "What the heck? A rabbi?" He says, "Every rabbi in America he goes..."

JF: He was an American rabbi.

MA: [laughing] He was a...actually a...chaplain.

JF: A chaplain, mmm hmm.

MA: A chaplain, yeah. No, we had, when I talked to him, we had so much fun. A rabbi!

JF: Right.

MA: You see, it isn't funny here. No.

JF: No. There that was a big thing.

MA: That was a big thing.
JF: Yeah.
MA: And we were in Germany and we got from UNRRA, we got support from UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association].
JF: How long were you in this camp?
MA: Three years.
JF: During the time that you were there, did you find that the people talked about their experiences during the war, or were they reluctant to talk about them?
MA: We stayed away from talking from it. It was too much, you see, you did want to live a little, you know? If you talk from it, life became miserable. But you know, as the years go by, I think we should talk about it.
JF: But at that time, during those years you were there...
MA: We, no, we didn't talk about it.
JF: You tended not to talk about it. Was there a Jewish community set up within the camp as far as services and education was concerned? Yes?
MA: Oh yeah, it was a whole, I'm going to show you. I have [tape off then on]
JF: There were seven camps within...
MA: Ulm.
JF: Seven different DP camps in Ulm.
MA: In Ulm. Yeah, yeah, you see, Ulm just happens, it was an army city. It was seven, seven army camps. And every army camp became a DP camp. They put in the people. And I was in the...I was, the first ones, they came to Sedan. Sedan was the center of all...
JF: Which one?
MA: Sedan *Kaserne*. It was, in the camp where I was, that was the center of all of the...
JF: And how do you spell that?
MA: Sedan, like a sedan car, you know.
JF: Oh, it's S-E-D-A-N.
MA: That's right. And...
JF: And then the second word was...
MA: Camp. A camp. Sedan *Kaserne*. *Kaserne*, that's, you know what *Kaserne* means.
JF: A camp.
MA: A camp. Yeah, that's in German, *Kaserne*.
JF: Which is what, C-O-C-E-?
MA: *Kaserne*, K-A-S-S-E-R-N-E [*Kaserne*].
JF: O.K. And that was the central camp...
MA: Yeah, yeah.
JF: Among all of the ones at Ulm.

MA: Yeah. Right away, when I came, I came there Thursday. Or Friday, I think. Thursday or Friday, yeah. And Saturday I find out that a couple kilometers from me is a camp from children. They...

JF: A DP camp of children?

MA: Yeah, that they brought children in from Czechoslovakia, a DP camp nothing but children.² So, I was thinking, I'm going over. Maybe they brought my...

JF: Your niece and nephews.

MA: My...nephews over, my two nephews. I came over *Shabbas*, they didn't let me in. So-

²The name of the DP camp for children was Bleidorn

Tape four, side two:

JF: This is tape four, side two, of an interview with Mr. Myer Adler, on November 10, 1982. You said they would not let you in because it was *Shabbas*.

MA: Because of *Shabbas*. So I start talking to his conscience, you know? A child, he would be glad to see me. Anyhow, he let me in. And I find out they were there!

JF: They were there!

MA: Oh, that was such a joyous...day that time. And later they, you see, they came to me every time and we were together again. And the little girl was there too. Yeah, and I remember once she was sick. Her eyes, something, and they took her to the hospital. So, I went every day and she didn't want to eat the food in the hospital. So, my wife made, I bought a little, you know, in Europe was a, they call them a *nashkis*, you know, it was one dish on top of the other with the one handle, you know? You could carry it. And I took a dinner. I took her every day a dinner. So, on Thursday she says to me, "You know, I'm getting more hungry. Tomorrow bring me more. Bring me double." I was always glad, I say, "You, listen, you will get too fat!" She says, "Oh, I'll never get too fat." She said, "Bring me more." So, I brought her, so, I brought her more. We came there. I came there, so she divides in half. This she eats today, that's tomorrow. I say, "What do you mean tomorrow? I'm going to bring you." She says, "No, I don't want you to bring me. Tomorrow is *Shabbas*. I don't want you to."

JF: Oh.

MA: [laughs]

JF: Observant little girl.

MA: Oh yeah.

JF: Yeah.

MA: She, she is even now from, in Israel. She lives in, they all live in Israel now, all the children.

JF: Now when you were living in the camp, were you, you said you were supported by UNRRA. Were you able to work also?

MA: Yeah. I worked. I worked in the camp.

JF: What did you do?

MA: That's my work. You see, *Yidishe Shtatishe Komitet* in Ulm.

JF: What does that mean?

MA: That's mean the *Yidishe*, Jewish, *Shtatishe*, that's mean a city, city-wide, *komitet*, the organization, in Ulm, that's mean's so every, every camp had its own government, right?

JF: Was this like a *kehillah*?

MA: That's right.

JF: O.K.

MA: *Shtatishe*. No, a *komitet* is *kehillah*. *shtatishe*, that's mean city.

JF: And comm-, oh, that's like a committee.

MA: Yeah. You see, every camp had his own ruling, right?

JF: Mmm hmm.

MA: Now there were one group what was over like the county seat, you know, rules over the cities. It was a *shtatishke komitet*. We were the highest instance of all, we...were the...

JF: The governing body.

MA: The governing body of all seven.

JF: So what...

MA: And we couldn't tell them whom to elect, but we could tell them, you know, everything else, you know, about the schools, about the work. Now I worked as a secretary of the labor.

JF: You were the secretary of the labor division?

MA: That's right.

JF: Meaning the...

MA: *Gevitmit*. That's the dedicated. *Technischen leite fun arbeitsamt*. I am the labor secretary.

JF: O.K.

MA: M. Adler.

JF: That's you. This is the book that you're looking at now which is...

MA: That's right.

JF: All about the work of the committee.

MA: That's right. That's right. That's right. That's right. Here, they were...that's the elected bodies, the four of them. There were four elected bodies. Now he was from the...he was sent from the UNRRA and he was from the *Sochnut* [Jewish Agency]. That's a, he was a delegate from Israel. This was already...

JF: So you're showing me pictures now in the book, of people.

MA: Yeah, yeah, and that's, that's, she was from America. She was from the Allied Jewish Distribution Committee. And that's from *Sochnut*. That's the same four guys what you saw there.

JF: And you were paid, then, by UNRRA for your work on the committee?

MA: That's the four guys. Yeah, here. That's me. *Technischer Leite fun Arbeitsamt*, [technical work expert] M. Adler. Now, you see, you got paid, you, everybody got the same thing. But if you worked, we didn't get paid in money. We get paid in practical things. You know, like what's his name, the committee, you know, he was a teacher. I forgot what's his name. He died a couple of years ago. Sam Levinson. He used to say, "My father gave us for Christmas a practical gift, like a haircut." We got paid practical gifts, like, you see, it was according what kind of work you did. If it's cigarettes, sugar and butter. Like, the main thing was the cigarettes. Cigarettes was a fortune there on the black market.

JF: And then you would use the black market...

MA: Oh, you sold it. That's right. You see, I got paid with 13 cartons cigarettes a month.

JF: I see.

MA: And a carton of cigarettes a month was enough. Because every cigarette you took, you split in three.

JF: Each cigarette you would split in three?

MA: Three, yeah, that's right, and turn it with...

JF: I see.

MA: [laughs]

JF: So you worked, your three years, you worked on this committee in this camp.

MA: I worked in this, yeah. I worked every, all the time there in Germany.

JF: Was your second son also born in Germany?

MA: Yeah.

JF: In the camp?

MA: Second son was in camp right before we, he was about six months, yeah.

JF: Before you left.

MA: Before we left.

JF: So it was what, 1949?

MA: In 19-, he was born in '48. He was born in the end of, he was born December 21st.

JF: 1948.

MA: 1948.

JF: Had you applied for a visa to the United States or...

MA: No. I'll tell you how it was. Actually, I wanted to go to Israel. Because once I came out from this, you know, I just want to be, that was my, my goal, to go to Israel. And a matter of fact, my brothers wrote me to come to America. And a cousin even sent me an affidavit. Which, an affidavit wasn't too good anyhow. They didn't recognize it, but anyhow, my...goal was to go to Israel. And in the beginning it wasn't easy because I came in in '46. And the State of Israel only started in '48. And that's mean in '46 and '47 it was very, a lot of my friends, yeah, I had friends, they were on the *Exodus* and they came back. Right away the *Exodus* what they were showing the picture, [Hollywood film] it didn't happen that way. [chuckles] I have news for you!

JF: You mean they didn't get in.

MA: No, they didn't get in. Never got in. No, they came back all of them. A lot of them got arrested. Their captain was hunted. We had, you see, we worked in the *Shtatishe*, in the committee, I, we had, we also, our job was also do the illegal work for Israel.

JF: So what happened? The boat returned and...

MA: The boat returned and the captain was hunted. They did want to arrest him. We hide him. We did hide him eight days. We hid him in Ulm. And later we sent him to Augsburg.

JF: The captain?

MA: The captain, yeah. But they, if they would caught him, the English would arrest him. And the Americans would give him out. Oh, they would, because they want to get that.

JF: The Americans would have handed him over?

MA: Oh, they would handed him over. Oh sure.

JF: What about the passengers themselves? Where did they go?

MA: They came back, most of them. All of them.

JF: They came back to DP camps in Germany?

MA: Yeah, to the DP camps, yeah.

JF: They were not in danger. It was the captain who was.

MA: No, no. I don't think so.

JF: It was the captain who they sought.

MA: No, no, no. That's right. They, wanted, what I knew, what they were on the [unclear]. A matter of fact the one who lives next door to me, their daughter was on the *Exodus*. They weren't, no, they weren't in danger at all. And after '48, when they won the war, so it was a legal thing. You could register to go to Israel. So listen to it. So now a camp was, in the, not in the *shtatishe*, but...I also belonged, you see, I worked in the *shtatishe*, the *shtatishe* committee didn't have actually people. Only we ruled all the seven camps. You know what I mean? But every camp had his own government and we elected every year new people, you know, who to be in charge. So there was a guy there, a teacher. And he was a very greedy guy. And he did run for this. And I saw that he will not make a good representative. You know, I was against him. I didn't run against him. But I supported somebody else. So, he took it very serious and he was a very sore—he didn't win—he was a very sore loser. Later, when the Jewish State became a State and we formed a committee to, you know, to, about the emigration, he was the secretary of the emigration. When my papers came up, he put them on the bottom. I was already ready. I already had, I was thinking for sure, because I was the one from the first one to be registered. And my brother wrote me that he has quarters for me. He has an apartment for me. And so I had a cousin. He lives now in Philadelphia. And he lived in Kassel. That's near Frankfurt. So, I find out, the General Consul, his name was Fingerwood [phonetic] that time, from the Israeli Consul who is in München, he is, I knew him from before, he was with me in the *yeshiva*! [laughing]

JF: So you went to him...

MA: So, I was thinking I will go to Munich and tell them the whole story and maybe he can do something about it. So, the bus who went to Munich came from Frankfurt. You know, the same bus came from Frankfurt, stopped in Munich and...

JF: Mmm hmm.

MA: When I sit, want sit down on the bus, my cousin from Frankfurt comes out. He says, "Where are you going?" I says, "I'm going to Frankfurt." He says, "I came to see you!" He says, "Now you're going away!" O.K., I exchanged him a ticket. The ticket could be any day, you know. Over there you bought a ticket it can be any day. So I took him home and we start talking and he says, "Why don't you go to America?" He says, "You see, it doesn't work," he says. "Maybe your destiny is America." He said, "Don't fight this. He doesn't want to let you go; maybe it's for your own good." And you know, I'm not superstitious, but when it comes to big, that's a big decision I think. So I was thinking maybe he's right and here are my two brothers, they're begging me to come. So I wrote to my brother in Palestine, in Israel, "Sorry. I'm going to America." And I wrote to my brother and he sent me right away papers. Not only sent me papers. When I came I had an apartment.

JF: Here to Philadelphia?

MA: No, Chester. Yeah, it was in Chester.

JF: This was in Chester first.

MA: What they did for me is hard to say.

JF: Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences during those years?

MA: Well, I had a very bad time when my wife died.

JF: Your wife died here?

MA: Yeah.

JF: You had gone through a great deal together.

MA: [weeping] That's the hardest thing.

JF: She died in 1959?

MA: 1959. And my se-, later, after three years, I remarried. And that was even harder yet, when she died. She was a wonderful girl. She took care of the children like they were her own. And of course my brothers were a big comfort, both times.

JF: And when you...came here, you started the market that you had in West Philadelphia?

MA: No, when I came first I worked for my brother in Chester. He had a store in Chester. You see, he had, he was a story. He was a sergeant in the army. And he trained me like I would be in the army! [laughs] He took it serious. He's a very serious guy. And of course like a brother, like a good brother, you know. First of all, he didn't let me read no Polish paper, no Russian paper, no Jewish paper. He start me off with the *Bulletin*. He says, "You live here. You have to learn English."

JF: So you learned English.

MA: I learned English.

JF: And gradually after that you got the small grocery store in...

MA: After three years—I worked with him three years—he says, “You can run a store by yourself. And both brothers got together. And they gave me the money and we started the store. And I started the store. I’ll never forget this one incident, in West Philadelphia, 50th and Brown. I needed a new cooler, for soda, cooler. So Pepsi-Cola sold that time coolers. And I made the arrangements because I remember \$200. I didn’t have the \$200. In beginning, you know, you start off a store. [unclear] [chuckles]. The first day I took in 20 some dollars. The first week something like \$180 a week I took in, you know? I had a big competition, a big store across the street. But anyhow, my brother comes and visits me and, yeah, and so I applied for credit to pay out. That is, I paid him \$20 down and would pay out. So, I got; later, so they checked my credit. I didn’t have credit nowhere because I always I bought something I paid cash. I didn’t have any charge cards nowhere no. So they sent me back the no check and, “Sorry, no credit.” So my brother comes and we’re sitting and talking and he sees a letter from the First Pennsylvania. He says, “What do you deal with the First Pennsylvania?” I say, “No,” I show it to him, “it’s just a letter.” He says, “Oh bunch of son of a...” He says, took out \$200, pay in cash for a soda machine! [laughs]

JF: Oh.

MA: But anyhow, later when I...got together some money I paid him up. This brother, he took from me right away the money. Every time I got a couple of dollars I give him. The other brother I knew he is an accountant. I knew I will have, he will not want to take it, and I didn’t want his. So, we got together the money. I remember it was a guy Harry Fein. He supplied us with meat. So I took every week and I paid him every week. So later I knew the brother supposed to come and I owed him \$1,000 and I was thinking I have to get a, I had already about now six, seven hundred dollars. So I was thinking I owe this Harry Fein \$200 and Louie Pinchas \$100, you know what I mean? So if I pay him next week, I will be able to pay the brother the \$1,000 Sunday. So when this Harry Fein and so, that was Thursday. I told him, “Harry, will that be all right if I will not pay you this week? I’ll pay you next week.” He says, “Why?” The first thing he says, “Why?” So I told him, “Because so and so, I want to pay the brother.” He says, “For crying out loud!” He knocks on the block, on the butcher block. He says, “If you needed more, why don’t you tell me!? And if you owe somebody, pay it!” And he runs out. He didn’t say nothing. He runs out. I didn’t know what to make out of it. And so he runs out. He says, “Whom else you will not pay?” I say, “Louie Pinchas.” “How much do you owe him?” I say, “Over \$100.” And he doesn’t say nothing and he runs again, keeps on running. And he lived not far. He lived here on the K apartments, you know, in Wynnefield. And he comes back, in a half an hour he comes back with a check, with his wife’s name signed, Sylvia Fein, \$350. He says, “Here. You needed money? Here is \$350. And if you owe somebody, pay him!” He says, “And when you have, I don’t ask you when to pay me back. Anytime when you have, pay me back.”

JF: Aw, that’s wonderful.

MA: You know what I mean? You have an experience like this. You change. If somebody does you something wrong sometimes, you know, that makes up for it. Now, another experience I got when we were in Chester, and so the first week, they, when I came to Chester, they, I didn't work. They took me around to this cousin, this cousin, this cousin. And they bought the kids things and this. And the apartment was furnished, everything, including a refrigerator, and everything! I'm telling you, including flowers on the table! And later, what else to buy us? So, my wife says to me, "You know, with two children, I could use," at that time, the first time they came out with a wringer washing machines, you know? "But I will not tell them. I want to buy it from my own money," she says. "I want to have a feeling out of my own."

JF: The feeling, yeah.

MA: Yeah. O.K., after the week I went to work and I got paid. I got \$50 a week, which I could make a living from it. And I paid \$15 a week rent. And I still saved, managed to save \$5 from the \$50, and the cooperation in *shul*. And they, it was right after *Rosh Hashanah*, you know, right after I came around September here, in this country. And I paid them every week \$5 and they kept them. They paid me interest. And before, later when I got saved up \$95, because they advertised, a wringer washing machine they advertised \$95. All the stores. All the appliance stores, furniture stores in Chester. So I got saved up \$95. I took it out. And we took my wife and the two children and we walked downtown in Chester. We go to one store. A wringer washing machine, \$95 here. So, how many months you want to pay? I say, "I want to pay cash." They didn't want to sell it to me.

JF: [chuckles] You were in America now!

MA: I didn't realize what America is! I went to another store, and they didn't want to sell it. And later I find out there is another store, Morton's. Morton's Appliance. I went there. And that was the third store, the last store. And I start arguing and I talked with Yiddish there. And my English was very bad that time. And I, [Yiddish], "My money is not good for you? I'll pay cash!" And I couldn't understand why I have to charge it. So, and I was thinking might as well I be charge. You know? So I, the guy comes out from the office. He says, "Where is the greenhorn here?" He heard my language. He says, "What's the matter, greenhorn?" So I told to him, "They don't want to take my money." He says, "Why?" So I told him the story. He says, "Come here. Which washing machine you want?"

JF: Oh.

MA: And he did. I talked to him and I said, "Oh, you give me the best. I don't know which one." He says, "Take this." And it was, I think a Maytag was it. And he says, "That's all?" "Yeah." "You have the \$95?" He took from me the \$95. He took \$5 back. He got me, "Here, here, here is...start saving again," he says.

JF: Oh, wonderful.

MA: He...told the driver to take me. He says, "Here, leave everything," he says. "I don't care. Take them home." He took us, me and the wife and the children. He took us home and...

JF: Oh, that's wonderful.

MA: So, so that's *yidn*, you know what I mean?

JF: Yeah, yeah.

MA: You know, the Talmud says, "*Yisroel af alpi shechata Yisroel hu.*" That's mean, "A Jew, even if he sins, he's a sinner, he's still a Jew."

JF: Mr. Adler, thank you. Thank you very, very much.

MA: Can I make you lunch?

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL FOR MYER ADLER INTERVIEW BY TELEPHONE, FEBRUARY 14, 1983 - WITH JOSEY FISHER

On Tape 4, side 2 of his interview, Mr. Adler refers to a DP camp of children in Ulm, Germany where he found his 2 nephews and niece.

The name of this camp was Bleidorn. It was one of seven DP camps in Ulm. Mr. Adler was in Sedan Kasserne also in Ulm. This camp, to Mr. Adler's knowledge had about 300 children up to the age of 14, most of them orphans and most of whom went to Israel eventually.

Mr. Adler's niece and nephews were not orphans. They were with him in Russia and returned with him and their parents to Poland. It was difficult to leave Poland, however, and a Zionist group, probably under the *Haganah*, arranged to transport the children across the Polish border - safer for both the children and their parents who also had to cross illegally. They were taken to a transit camp in Prague, again only for children (Mr. Adler does not know the name) and then taken to Bleidorn where they were taught Hebrew and prepared for Israel. The childrens' parents (Mr. Adler's sister and brother-in-law) left Poland 2 months after their children, together with 2 older daughters and went to Paris. Their oldest son went to a youth camp in Frankfurt under the *Agunah*.

After 2 years, the children were reunited with their parents in Paris, with Mr. Adler's help, and the whole family went to Israel.