

Interviewee:	<u>ASH-FUHRMAN</u> , Chayale	Date:	September 21, 1981
Interviewer:	Josey G. Fisher		
Audio tapes:	4 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
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SUMMARY

Chayale Ash-Fuhrman, nee Averbuch, was born in 1920 in Kishinev, Bessarabia, Romania. She describes life in Kishinev, her education in public school and private Jewish school. Her parents led a troupe of Yiddish actors which she joined until she turned professional at age 15. She gives a thorough and highly descriptive account of the Yiddish stage. She details Romanian government restrictions in the inter-war period and the effects of the Russian occupation of Bessarabia in 1940. The Moldavian Yiddish State Theatre, as it was then called, could function only under strict Communist guidelines.

In June 1941, the theatre group and other civilians were evacuated to Ukraine with Russian help. They were forced to stop in a *kolkhoz* (cooperative village) in Kharkov to help with the harvest. The refugees lived under primitive conditions and encountered antisemitism from the villagers. In November 1941 they followed the government to Kuybishev, then to Tashkent to pick cotton in another cooperative. She describes the difficulties of adapting to the Russian way of getting along; relations with the locals, and the onset of hatred for Jews. Her father died of dysentery in 1942. Using her training from professional school, she joined a sewing cooperative to get more bread. Chayale and the other Jews tried to practice their religion. Chayale later worked as a clerk in a steel mill in Begovat. She married a man who was working as a mechanic at the mill in 1943. In 1945, Chayale and her husband returned to Poland in an exchange program for Polish citizens. They settled in a Displaced Persons camp in Silesia because of the post-war violence against Jews by Poles. She worked as emigration secretary for *Poalei Tzion* and mentions various strategies Jewish refugees used to leave Russia.

In 1948 Chayale, her husband and her mother, walked to Vienna. Israelis met their group and placed them in a Displaced Persons camp in Linz, in the American zone, where Chayale gave birth to a daughter. UNRRA and the Joint Distribution Committee helped them go to Jaffa, Israel in August 1948 with false papers, on an Italian ship *Campidoglio*. She talks about early immigrant life in Israel under wartime conditions. In 1949 she founded the Haifa Yiddishe Operetten Theatre and later went to Tel Aviv. She also performed in London, and toured South Africa with an all-Israeli ensemble. She divorced in 1953. She married an actor from Romania in New York in 1959 and stayed in the United States. She discusses her feelings about the Holocaust and its effect on children of survivors.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War 1939 – 1945 Personal narratives, Jewish
World War 1939 – 1945 Russian occupation – Romania/Bessarabia
World War 1939 – 1945 Deportation from Romania
Antisemitism
Slave labor – Kharkov, Ukraine
Moldavian Yiddish State Theatre
Refugee camps – Silesia 1945
Life in Israel