

## **Leonard and Edith Ehrlich collection**

### **Introductory note by Anatol Steck, Project Director in the International Archival Programs Division of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:**

These summary transcription notes of the digitized interviews recorded by Leonard and Edith Ehrlich in the 1970s as part of their research for their manuscript about the Jewish community leadership in Vienna and Theresienstadt during the Holocaust titled "Choices under Duress" are a work in progress. The project started in April 2016 and is ongoing. The summary notes are being typed while listening to the recordings in real time; this requires simultaneous translation as many of the interviews are in German, often using Viennese vernacular and/or Yiddish terms (especially in case of the lengthy interview with Benjamin Murmelstein which the Ehrlichs recorded with Mr. and Mrs. Murmelstein over several days in their apartment in Rome and which constitutes a major part of this collection). The summary notes are intended as a tool and a finding aid for the researcher; researchers are strongly encouraged to consult the digitized recordings for accuracy and authenticity and not to rely solely on the summary notes. As much as possible, persons mentioned by name in the interviews are identified and described in the text; however, as persons are often referred to in the interviews only by last name, their identification is sometimes based on the context in which their names appear within the interview (especially in cases where different persons share the same last name). In case of the interview with Benjamin Murmelstein, unless specifically stated at the beginning of the tape by Leonard Ehrlich, it is not always clear whether a particular interview segment continues in the correct order or, as the interview was recorded over several days, a particular interview segment continues where the interview was concluded on the previous day. It is possible that the individual interview segments are not in their correct order. – Washington, D.C., July 2016

#### **RG-50.862\*0006**

##### **Oral history interview with Benjamin Murmelstein**

#### **RG-50.862.0006.01.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murmelstein** continued. Interview segment starts with Leonard Ehrlich's introductory remark: "Interview mit Dr. Murmelstein in Rom."

#### **RG-50.862.0006.02.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murmelstein** continued.

#### **RG-50.862.0006.03.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murmelstein** continued.

**RG-50.862.0006.04.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Interview segment starts with Leonard Ehrlich stating that this segment is about the "Irrefuehrung der Kommission" (the deception of the [Red Cross] delegation).

**RG-50.862.0006.05.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued.

**RG-50.862.0006.06.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued.

**RG-50.862.0006.07.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued.

**RG-50.862.0006.08.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued.

**RG-50.862.0006.09.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued.

**RG-50.862.0006.10.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued.

**RG-50.862.0006.11.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Interview segment starts with Leonard Ehrlich stating that he will now ask follow-up questions. Murrelstein replies that the answers he just gave were important because they still referred to yesterday's questions. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

**RG-50.862.0006.12.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Interview segment starts with Murrelstein stating that cigarettes were strictly forbidden [in Theresienstadt]. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

**RG-50.862.0006.13.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Strong traffic noise coming through an open window. Interview segment starts with Murrelstein and Leonard Ehrlich debating whether a certain "Sacher" (?) is a rabbi or a historian. Leonard Ehrlich mentions Brandeis University. Leonard Ehrlich mentions that Sacher wrote a history of

the Jews. Philosophical discussion. Murrelstein states that he strove for ideals which were unobtainable, among them knowledge, politics, religion, science. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sound quality: Good

**RG-50.862.0006.14.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Strong traffic noise coming through an open window. Interview segment starts with Leonard Ehrlich in mid-sentence: "...26th of July and we are continuing the interview with Benjamin Murrelstein." Strong traffic noise coming through an open window. Murrelstein shows Leonard Ehrlich and Edith Ehrlich the letterhead of Theresienstadt which has a cityscape depiction of the ghetto that he refers to as "playful as a spa town." [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sound quality: Good

**RG-50.862.0006.15.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Strong traffic noise coming through an open window. Interview segment starts with Murrelstein reading from a letter from Desider Friedmann dated October 31, 1942, written at a time during which, according to Murrelstein, the mortality rate in Theresienstadt was 250 - 350 individuals per day. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sound quality: Good

**RG-50.862.0006.16.20.mp3**

Interview with Benjamin Murrelstein continued. Strong traffic noise coming through an open window. Interview segment starts with Murrelstein in mid-sentence.

Sound quality: Good

**RG-50.862.0006.17.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Strong traffic noise coming through an open window. Interview segment starts with Murrelstein in mid-sentence. Murrelstein talks about how he got involved in emigration matters in Vienna. He states that he was never interested in emigration, that he had no prior knowledge but that he saw that emigration matters were not being properly administered and that he recognized that he could improve on that. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sound quality: Good

**RG-50.862.0006.18.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Strong traffic noise coming through an open window. Interview segment starts with Leonard Ehrlich restating where the

previous segment left off, namely that Murrelstein had been talking about someone who had borrowed a violin. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sound quality: Good

**RG-50.862.0006.19.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Interview segment starts with Leonard Ehrlich asking Murrelstein to talk about the speech that he gave at the occasion of Dollfuss's death in the summer of 1934 and whether the text of the speech was published in the newspaper. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sound quality: Good

**RG-50.862.0006.20.20.mp3**

Interview with **Benjamin Murrelstein** continued. Murrelstein talks about the neglect of patients who would die of starvation in and next to their beds, soiled and uncleaned, because there was no one to take care of them. [SUMMARY TO BE CONTINUED.]

Sound quality: Mediocre