

# Liana Degtiar

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Kishinev

Moldova

Interviewer: Nathalia Fomina

Date of interview: June 2004



Liana Degtiar is a sweet young-looking lady with her grayish hair cut short. She is 71 years old, but she doesn't look a day older than 65. She is energetic, active, her manners are a little cold, but she has a sense of humor.

She seems to be imperious in her own way. She can't be bothered to concentrate on the ethnical and customary details that are so important for us, but surprisingly she gave us a colorful description of the life of her family in evacuation in Tajikistan with every little detail. Liana, her husband Ivan Barbul and their son Boris live in a spacious three-bedroom apartment on the tenth floor of an apartment building in Ryshkanovka, a green and comfortable district of Kishinev. This is a typical intelligent Soviet family whose members have broad outlooks and know about art and literature. They have a big collection of fiction and technical books. Their apartment is furnished to serve the purpose of convenience for its tenants. There is a desk by the window: a cozy ottoman in the corner with a lamp bracket over it. The husband and wife care about each other. The husband slightly teases his wife, but he clearly shows his affection for her. Liana offered me some tea and a piece of cake which she made before my visit.

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## My family background

My paternal grandfather, Borukh Degtiar, was born in 1877. He lived in Soroki, Bessarabia [1](#) [Editor's note: Soroki: a district town in Bessarabia province, today in Moldova. According to the census of 1897 there were 15,351 residents and 8,783 of them were Jews. In 1910 there was a synagogue and 16 prayer houses in Soroki]. I don't know where he was born. He owned a fabric store. My grandfather wasn't highly educated, but he could read, write and count well. He could read and write in Yiddish and spoke fluent Russian and Romanian. My father told me that my grandfather was extremely good in mathematics and could solve complicated problems in algebra just by using mathematical principles. My father, who had graduated from the Electromechanical Faculty of the University of Cannes, couldn't figure out how he managed to do this. Grandfather Borukh's grandsons must have inherited their grandfather's talent to exact sciences. My grandfather had a number of talents. He could sing well and was a cantor at the synagogue. My grandfather and grandmother spoke Yiddish to one another. They were religious, read the Yizkor and I'm sure they followed the kashrut.

Soroki was a Jewish town, but there were also Russian, Moldovan and Ukrainian inhabitants. They got along well and had no conflicts. My grandfather was a very decent man and was well respected by all in the town. I stayed with my grandparents in Soroki when I was seven years old, but I can't remember what my grandfather was like. I think he was tall. My aunts have his photos where he has a moustache, but no beard. He had a brick house with a shingle roof, in the center of Soroki. I don't know how many rooms there were in the house, but there were four families living there before the Great Patriotic War [2](#). It was a long house with a porch on each side. There was a smaller house in the yard. There was a square verandah in the center of the yard with grape vines twining around it. There was also a deep cellar under the verandah where my grandparents kept their food stocks in summer. My grandfather's store was somewhere else. However, my grandfather proved to be a poor businessman. He used to sell fabric on trust. Some customers never paid back their debts and my grandfather went bankrupt. Then he had to sell half of the house to a doctor or a lawyer. He also sold his little house in the yard.

My grandmother, Beila Degtiar, whose maiden name I don't know, was born in 1878. She was short and had a hunched back from her old age. I can hardly remember her. In a picture where she was probably photographed when she was younger, she wears no wig or shawl. She didn't have any education. She was a housewife and had to work hard having to take care of their six children: five daughters and a son, my father. My grandmother was hospitable, and the house was always full of visitors.

My father's sister Rachil was born in 1901. She finished a gymnasium in Soroki and graduated from the university in Iasi [today Romania]. I think she was a lawyer, but when I knew her she didn't work. Aunt Rachil married Naum Rozhnov. Their daughter Dina, born in 1934, and son Yuzik, Jewish name Iosif, born in 1935, and I were about the same age and we were childhood friends. Uncle Naum must have been a chemist. He worked at a sugar factory in a small town near Bucharest [today Romania]. I liked visiting them. In 1940, when Bessarabia was annexed to the Soviet Union [see Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union] [3](#), Aunt Rachil, her husband and children returned to Grandfather Borukh's house in Soroki. Uncle Naum went to work.

During the war they evacuated to Kazakhstan. They lived in the village of Zirabulak near Samarkand where Uncle Naum worked at a sugar factory. They returned in 1948 and moved to Chernovtsy [today Ukraine]. I think Uncle Naum went to work at the sugar factory again and Aunt Rachil was a housewife. Yuzik finished the Polytechnic College in Novochoerkassk [today Russia] and worked in Kishinev. Later, he returned to Novochoerkassk, and defended a doctor dissertation. He is a lecturer at the Polytechnic College. He is married. His son Ilia lives in Sochi [today Russia]. Dina studied at the Teachers' College in Soroki, but she never finished it. She got married. Dina's husband, Isaac, died a few years ago. Their son Alik moved to America and got married there. Uncle Naum died in 1973 and Aunt Rachil in 1987 in Chernovtsy.

My father's sister Gita, born in 1906, graduated from the Pharmaceutical Department of the university in Iasi and went to work as a pharmacist. Gita married my father's former group mate in the Realschule, Yakov Shtivelman. My father told me that Yakov wrote his diploma thesis on the October revolution [see Russian Revolution of 1917] [4](#) before finishing the Realschule [5](#). Yakov was a talented man. He graduated from the Chemical Faculty of the university in Iasi. He and Aunt Gita lived in Bucharest and we visited them. In 1931 their son Carl was born. In 1940 they also returned to Bessarabia. Uncle Yakov worked as a chemistry teacher in the Jewish school in Soroki. He always

recalled this school with a warm feeling; they had a great team of teachers there. During the war, Aunt Rachil and Uncle Yakov evacuated to the vicinity of Samarkand. They worked at a sugar factory. Yakov was a chemist and Gita worked at the laboratory, or perhaps, she was a pharmacist. In 1945 their second son Boris was born. They returned to Soroki in 1948.

Carl graduated from the Faculty of Physics of Chernovtsy University. He is a theoretical physicist. He tried to enter the postgraduate course at Moscow State University six times, but failed probably because of Item 5 [6](#). He finally entered the postgraduate course at the Institute of Physics named after Ioffe in Leningrad [today Russia] in the late 1950s. Carl lived in the dormitory during his studies. His co-tenants were Chinese. At that time there were many students from China in the USSR. His friends jokingly called him the 'Chinese emperor.' When I went to Leningrad on business Carl took me to Ioffe's lectures. Carl married a Jewish girl from Chernovtsy, a daughter of his parents' acquaintances. Their daughter's name was Vita. Carl defended his doctor thesis, and worked in a scientific research institute in Kazan, a 'box' [this was the word for scientific organizations doing sensitive work in the USSR]. He was a theoretical physicist. Carl divorced his wife and remarried. His second wife Galia was Russian. Their daughter fell seriously ill and died.

Carl was offered a job at Ternopol University where he taught all theoretical disciplines in physics. Uncle Yakov died in 1984, and Aunt Gita moved in with Carl in Ternopol [today Ukraine]. Her younger son Boris graduated from the Faculty of Physics of Novosibirsk University and worked there at the Academic district. He defended a candidate's dissertation [see Soviet Doctoral degrees] [7](#). He married Dina, a Russian girl. Some time later they moved to Gelendjik [today Russia] and worked at the Scientific Research Institute of Oceanology. During perestroika [8](#) the institute was closed. Boris moved to Israel in 1991. Aunt Gita followed him in 1994. Carl also moved there in April 1995. He was 64 years old; he never managed to learn Ivrit and gave lessons in theoretical physics to university students in Israel. Aunt Gita is over 90 years old. I visited them in 1997 in Kfar Saba [today Israel], when Aunt Gita was full of energy. She welcomed her guests, did the cooking and served at the table. Carl convinced me to give a lecture to immigrants about the current situation in the former USSR. Aunt Gita also listened to me. Boris is involved in the organization of specialized schools for talented children in Israel.

My father's sister Dvoira was born in 1909. She married Abram Kogan. In 1931 their son Lyova [affectionate for Leonid] was born. Dvoira had a secondary education and gave private classes teaching German. My father liked telling the following funny story: on his way from France, where he studied, to Soroki, his companion in the compartment, a lady from Soroki, boasted to him of her fluent German. She said she thought Yiddish was very close to German. To prove this she started speaking 'German' which sounded similar to Yiddish. My father asked her, 'But how come you speak such good German?' and she replied, 'But of course I do! My teacher was Dvoira Degtiar!' My father often joked afterward about my aunt teaching German. During the war Dvoira and her family evacuated to Uzbekistan. I don't remember in which town they stayed. After the war they returned to Soroki.

Uncle Abram worked as an economist or accountant at a garment factory. In 1947 their daughter Nela was born. My aunt finished the Pedagogical College via correspondence and became a Moldovan teacher at school. Her son Lyonia [affectionate for Leonid] was a gifted boy, but not quite industrious. At one time he studied at the Mathematical Department of the Teacher's Training College in Soroki. Aunt Dvoira accompanied him to the lectures in social sciences: Lyonia fell asleep

and Aunt Dvoira took notes of the lectures for him assiduously. Later, Lyonia graduated from the Moscow Technological College and worked at the 'Elektromashina' plant in Kishinev. He was the manager of the laboratory. Nela graduated from the Polytechnic College in Novocherkassk and got married. They were the first of our family to move to Israel in 1974. They lived in Be'er Sheva. Abram died in 1980, and Aunt Dvoira died in 1988. Nela and her family live in Be'er Sheva and Lyonia lives in Tel Aviv.

My father's sister Fenia was born in 1920. She was believed to be the prettiest and most talented one in the family. She loved music, sang and danced well. Fenia entered a college in Bucharest. When Soviet forces entered Bessarabia in 1940, she returned to Soroki. There was a military unit lodged in Soroki. Fenia met a young handsome officer. His name was Anatoliy Beliayev. He was a Russian from Moscow. They fell in love with each other. This caused a mess in the family: a traditional patriarchal Jewish family member and this Russian guy! They decided to get married and move to Moscow. Grandmother Beila locked Fenia in the house, but her children had more progressive views: they were in love. How could she oppose to their getting married? They convinced my grandmother to let her go, and they left for Moscow. Fenia spoke fluent Russian and Romanian. She worked at a radio station in Moscow. The war began in 1941. Tolia [Anatoliy] went to the front on the first days of the war and perished. Fenia lived with his parents and sister. In early 1941 she gave birth to a girl. Fenia got peritonitis in hospital. She died. Her daughter also died. Anatoliy's sister told me this story after the war. Anatoliy's sister never got married, so there was no continuation of their family.

My father's younger sister Riva was born in 1923. She finished a secondary school in Soroki. When the war began in 1941, Riva and my grandparents stayed in Soroki. They were taken to Pechora Camp [9](#) in Vinnitsa region [today Ukraine]. My grandparents died in the camp. Riva survived. When the Soviet forces liberated the camp, she returned to Grandfather Borukh's house in Soroki. Riva had two rooms in the house. We also returned to this house from evacuation. Riva got married and went to serve in the Soviet army. After the war she and her husband were demobilized and lived in the village of Kotyuzhany. Riva divorced her husband and moved to Uzbekistan in 1947 to live with Aunt Gita. Later, she and my aunt's family moved to Chernovtsy. Riva finished medical school and went to work as a medical nurse. She married a widower who had a twelve-year-old daughter. Her name was Rosa. Riva couldn't have children. Riva raised the girl, whose two children became her grandchildren. When her second husband died, Riva got married for the third time. Her third husband's name was Ox and Riva adopted another daughter. Her name was Ella. They moved to Israel. Riva lives in Lod. She is a great-grandmother now and is well cared for.

My father, Elih Degtiar, was born in Soroki in 1903. He was called El' Borisovich in the Russian manner [Russians use to call people with the second name - patronymic also, but they used the Russian name Boris instead of the Jewish one Boruch in this case], and at home he was called Elik. His sisters loved him dearly and his wish was their command: 'Whatever Elik says.' My father must have studied in a cheder. He also learned to play the violin for a short time. After finishing elementary school he entered a Realschule in Soroki. There was a five percent quota [10](#) in tsarist Realschule. My father passed the entrance exams with excellent marks and won the competition. His group mate Yakov Shtivelman from Rashkov later married his sister Gita. After finishing the Realschule, which happened when Bessarabia was annexed to the USSR, my father went to study in Iasi. One year later, he went to study at the Electromechanical Faculty of the university in

Cannes, France. On summer vacations my father worked in France. In 1927, he graduated from the university and worked in France for some time. Since he was a Romanian citizen he went back home to serve his mandatory term in the army. He was a sergeant and served at the headquarters in Beltsy. He and his fellow comrade were lodged with the family of the Tsavalers, my mother's family.

My maternal grandfather, Solomon Tsavaler, lived in Beltsy. He must have been born there since his relatives lived there. Solomon was a railroad freight forwarder. He had a house in Beltsy. My grandmother Leya actually had two names, but I only remember one, and I don't know her maiden name. She was Solomon's second wife. His first wife died. My mother had a half-brother from my grandfather's first marriage. His name was Mosia: this must have been an affectionate of Moisey. Mosia Tsavaler lived in Istanbul, Turkey. He and his family perished during World War II. Grandmother Leya died in 1926.

My mother, Sophia Tsavaler, was born in Beltsy in 1908. She finished a gymnasium. She was 18 when her mother died. My mother lived with her brother and worked in Istanbul for a year. She also studied in an English college. Then she didn't like it there for some reason and returned to her father. She worked as a typist in a bank and then became a document operator. My mother was of average height and very pretty. She met my father and after his service was over, they moved to Bucharest where they got married in 1930.

## Growing up

I don't think they had a wedding party. They didn't have a marriage certificate issued by the synagogue [ketubbah], but they had one issued by a civil registry office. They rented an apartment in Bucharest. My father was an engineer in a company. I was born in 1933. Soon after, my father was arrested. He wasn't a communist, but he must have sympathized with communists and probably supported them somehow. He stayed in jail for about a year. My mother hired an attorney. There was a trial, but my father was finally released. In jail he contracted tuberculosis. He couldn't go to work for a while. Since I had never seen my father before I turned one year old, and when he came home, I didn't recognize him, and pointed my finger at a photo, 'This is my father.' Later, my father went to work as an engineer in an electric engineering company.

I have vague memories of our apartment in Bucharest. My nanny and I stayed in the biggest room. There was a dining room with a radio and a big table in it. My parents rearranged the fore-room for a bedroom. They had one big double bed in it. My parents must have spoken Russian at home since I started talking in this language. My parents didn't observe Jewish traditions or celebrate Jewish holidays at home. Perhaps, my mother baked something on Purim or Chanukkah. My mother was a typist at the railroad office. My nanny was Polish I think. She was a devoted Catholic and took me to the Roman Catholic Church regularly. At first I listened to the priest when he pronounced his prayers. Once, I started singing myself, when everybody else was quiet. After that my nanny stopped taking me with her. Later she left us. My mother was desperate as she had to go to work and needed a baby sitter. She told me, as she was wondering what to do about the situation, she saw a young nice-looking girl walking towards her. My mother asked her, 'Where can I find a nanny?' And the girl replied, 'But I can work for you!'

This was how Mariora came into our family. Mariora was an illegitimate daughter of a beautiful gypsy woman and a Romanian landlord. She grew up in his mansion. She could read and write in



Romanian, but this was all the education she had. When she came to our house, she was already married. Her husband was a private in the Romanian army. Mariora took care of me and took me out to walk in the park. I picked up some Romanian from her, but I never learned to read or write. I think my Romanian was more beautifully spoken than the Romanian they speak in Moldova nowadays. Mariora stayed with us even when I went to kindergarten. I think this was a private kindergarten. They didn't teach us to read or write, but we learned embroidery and other handicrafts: we made carton toys and decorated them with applications. Mariora was so attached to our family that when we were leaving Bucharest she wanted to go to Bessarabia with us, but it wasn't possible. I often thought about her after the war and still remember her.

My parents' friends and relatives often visited us in Bucharest. My father's younger sisters, Fenia and Riva, often visited us, and Gita and Yakov and their son Carl, who also lived in Bucharest, often came to see us also. Carl was two years older than me. We were friends. Gita told me that she once overheard our small talk. I asked Carl, 'What will you do when you grow up?' He thought a little and said, 'I will be a philosopher.' 'What do philosophers do?' I asked. 'I will be sitting and thinking.' Then I said, 'Ha! What would you eat then?' My father's sister Rachil and my cousin brother Yuzik and cousin sister Dina lived near Bucharest and often came to see us as well. I shall never forget visiting them in their little town on Christmas Eve. It was like a fairy-tale. The trees were covered with snow, and the one-storied houses also had their roofs covered with snow. There were only dim lights in the dark town. People dressed up and sang carols and there were jingle bells ringing. I was four or five years old, but I can still remember how I was impressed by this fabulous beauty.

## During the War

In 1939 World War II began. There were rumors spreading about how fascists persecuted Jews taking them to ghettos and concentration camps. When Bessarabia was annexed to the USSR, the residents were given one week to return to Moldova. My parents had no doubts about returning, and I understood from what the adults discussed that we were to go to Moldova because it was too dangerous to stay in Romania. My parents believed that we would only be safe in the USSR. Besides, they wanted to be close to their parents. My father's sisters Rachil and Gita and their families also returned to Bessarabia. We could only take our most necessary belongings with us. My parents had to borrow some money for the trip from their acquaintances. They also borrowed some money for my mother's colleague, my friend Lialia Burliy's father and his family, who were to go with us.

We arrived in Beltsy, where Grandfather Solomon lived, but we didn't stay there for long. I don't know where my parents worked, but I stayed at home with my grandfather and his new wife, a nice and kind woman. I don't know her name. I remember that a dog bit me in the yard and my mother took me to a hospital in Kishinev to inoculate me against rabies. We also had the dog's tests with us to identify whether it had rabies. My mother also obtained a permit for us to go to Kishinev to get medical treatment, if necessary. They prepared a series of injections for me at a clinic, which was located in the center of town. One morning an earthquake in Kishinev destroyed a few buildings, including the clinic. Fortunately, we weren't there at that moment. The dog turned out to be healthy, and I didn't need injections.

In summer I was sent to Grandmother Beila in Soroki. My cousins Carl, Yuzik, Dina and Lyonia, were there too. We played in the yard. We spoke Romanian to one another. My grandparents spoke Yiddish. I picked up some Yiddish, but I didn't mention it to anybody that I began to understand the language. Many wealthy families, including a number of Jews, were deported to Siberia from Soroki in summer. My future classmate Asia's father, a doctor, accompanied the train. Grandfather Borukh didn't suffer any persecution. He wasn't wealthy by that time, and besides, his children sympathized with the communist ideas. I went back to Beltsy. Soon Grandfather Solomon fell ill with pneumonia. He died in January 1941. My mother didn't want to stay in Beltsy. We moved to Grandfather Borukh's house in Soroki. My father went to work as an engineer in the town executive committee.

In June the war began. There were bombings of Kishinev. A bomb killed my parent's friend Marelskiy in the central square at 6am. I think my parents and I evacuated in early July. Nobody expected this war to last long. My grandparents stayed home: they were too old to travel. We took a folder with documents, silver spoons, forks, my grandmother's gold rings, necklace and a chain and locket. We also had a few suitcases with winter clothes. We had to cross the Dnestr on a boat. My father also helped other people to sail to the opposite bank. At this moment an air raid began. Germans were shooting their machine guns. It was a squall of lead. There were many victims, but my father continued helping people to cross the river. He finally picked us to take us to the other side, but we had to leave some of our luggage behind. We couldn't take the luggage while so many people were still waiting to cross the river. I think after we crossed the river, the crossing was closed. We moved to the railroad station in Vapnyarka [today Ukraine]. We walked across the fields, I also had to carry some luggage, and I kept moaning, but I didn't drop it. We seemed to be walking endlessly before we took a train to Vinnitsa.

In Vinnitsa we boarded a train heading east. I don't remember anything about this trip. We arrived at Shakhty in Rostov region [today Russia]. My father went to work as a teacher in a Mining College as he knew Russian well. He and his students descended into a shaft to study electrical equipment. It was time for me to go to school. I had my birth certificate issued in Romanian. Who would have known Romanian in Shakhty? My name was also indicated in my father's Soviet passport. Right before 1st September my father was mobilized to the army. My mother and I went to the recruitment office with my father, when it occurred to me that I had no documents whatsoever mentioning my name or any information about me. We went to the military commandant to convey this problem to him and request for some kind of a certificate with my name included in it. He looked at my father's passport and said, 'Ah, you are a Bessarabian. We don't recruit Bessarabians' [Soviet power didn't trust the former Romanian citizens]. He sent my father home.

On 1st September I went to school, but I don't remember the first day whatsoever. I remember my kind first teacher. She wasn't young. She told me that she had traveled to Finland and that nobody in Finland locked their doors: there were no thieves. Once she sent me home to pick something. On my way back I got lost and was very scared. I was crying when I finally got to school, and she comforted me tenderly: very much like my grandmother. I was sociable and made friends with many children in the yard. I remember two brothers. They were there with their mother. Their father, an officer, was at the front. By the way, another dog bit me in Shakhty, but this time there was no ado about it, there were other problems to deal with. Shakhty was an ordinary town. Children went to school, played in the yard, and people went to the cinema. The only sign of war

was that there were many military men in the town. It all ended instantly, when one day, a few months later, the front line came close to the town.

We had to move forward. We took a train to Rostov. There was a big junction station where there were crowds of people. The Germans never stopped bombing, there were air raid alarms. What were we to do? We ran under some tents at the station. Their roofs were covered with some steel sheets. The bullets echoed hitting on them. It was so scary! People huddled up to one another. We finally managed to get on a train heading east. We arrived at Makhachkala [today Russia]. The front line was advancing to the east as well. In Makhachkala we boarded a freight boat. I don't remember how long it sailed for. The deck was full of old people, children, babies and their families who had left their homes. There were attacks on us from the air. I also remember that there were problems with the toilets. There were long lines to the toilets. We arrived in Krasnovodsk [today Russia] where we took a train to Stalinabad [today Tajikistan] where my father received an order to go to work at the Kurgan-Tubinskaya region, Oktiabrskiy district, site of Vahshstroy [Construction of a big irrigation system in the Vahshskaya Valley on the Vahsh River in Tajikistan]. This construction started before the war and there were American engineers involved. Bruno Jasienski wrote a novel about this construction. [Bruno Jasienski (1901- 1938): Polish and Russian Soviet writer, lived in the USSR since 1929. The novel the interviewee is referring to is called 'Man's slough'.]

Our family was accommodated in a barrack in Vahshstroy. These were barracks for eight families. Each family had a room, small fore room and porch. There was no heating but the winters were warm. There were primus stoves for cooking. We slept outside all year round as it was stuffy inside. We were given mosquito nets as there were lots of malaria mosquitoes. Every evening we spread those nets over the transom beams on both sides of the beds, tying them on top and at the bottom to protect us from the wind. However, we all fell ill with malaria. My mother had the most serious condition. Every autumn she was taken to hospital, having acute attacks of malaria. I had fever and was shivering. I went to bed and my parents covered me with all the available blankets for me to get warmer. My mother had quinine every day, and my father and I were given achrichine. Acclimatization was particularly hard with children. I fell ill with measles. Like many other children I had furuncles on my legs.

My mother worked at a sovkhoz [11](#) named Yakko-Din producing astrakhan fur. She was a typist and then chief of the planning department. She was given a horse which she rode to the mountains where sheep flocks were taken for the summer. She collected data for the district department. My father was a physics teacher at a school. Later, he taught mathematics, chemistry, drawing, astronomy and even German since there weren't enough teachers at the school. At one point he resigned from school to be recruited into the army. He went to the recruitment point in Stalinabad where the medical commission discovered that he had a closed form of tuberculosis. He was released from military service and returned to us. We were happy about it. I also went to this Russian school, the only school in the area.

I don't remember whether there were cards [see Card system] [12](#) or lists of people in order to get food and bread from a store by standing in a queue. Also, all the children in this village received half a liter of milk every day. It was my chore to stand in the queue for milk with a jar. Occasionally, we received horsemeat, but never any butter or oil. Very rarely were we given cotton-seed oil, which tasted bitter. All other products were supplied to the front. We also received a very small plot of land for a vegetable garden. We had two crops per year. The climate was warm and there



was irrigation: all the plots had little aryl canals. Every morning and evening, people made clay dams on their plots to collect water for the plants. We grew carrots, potatoes, corns, lentils, beans, eggplants, paprika, and melons. We had lots of vegetables. I could eat to my heart's content. Each of us could have a water melon three times a day. We dried the water melons on the roof and had water melon marmalade which was delicious. There were also gardens in the village where I had dried apricots, grapes and raisins. There were pistachios growing in the steppe.

There were engineers and technicians, who had constructed the channel and stayed to operate it. There were doctors, and other people who might have been deported here for various reasons; maybe they were kulaks [13](#) brought here in the 1930s. Many of them were doing well here. There was a railroad 15 kilometers from the village, and its employees also lived in the village. There were mainly Russians living in the village. Jewish families arrived here during the war. My parents had an acquaintance Schreber, a former Polish Jew [see Annexation of Eastern Poland] [14](#), a husband and wife from Romania. The wife taught German at the school. She had a psychosis which had been caused by hunger before we developed our vegetable gardens: she used to run to the canteen grabbing any food she could reach and didn't pay for it. Later, her husband came in to pay for her. Then her husband went to the front and she stayed behind. Later she reevacuated. There was a Jewish family from Belarus: a mother, father and daughter. The daughter was about 25, when her parents died. There was no anti-Semitism. Life was hard, it was the wartime. Many people were dying. Muslims buried their dead with no coffins. Jackals dug up the graves.

There was some infrastructure in the village: a school, post office, polyclinic, some public catering companies, but they were miserable. People were very poor. Every week there was a Soviet movie shown at the club. We stowed inside and the adults had to pay, I guess. The children were very emotional: worrying and shouting. They got very excited and couldn't calm down for a while. There were other villages around. They had numbers: village one, two, three, etc. There was one German village. Germans were deported here before the war. This village was different from the others: everything was neat i.e. houses, gardens and everything else.

All year round I just ran around wearing my underpants. Only for a couple of winter months I wore some sandals which I had knitted myself. There were ground roads and a thick layer of dust which was knee high. There were many thorns. We ignored the small ones from our feet and took out the bigger ones. When we started bleeding after removing a big thorn we pasted the wound with dust and went on running around. It might have caused stupor, but we somehow were all right. There were canals alongside the roads. There were mulberry trees on the sides of these canals intending to grow silkworms. We, kids, ate plenty of mulberries and dried them for winter. There were fields of cotton around the village. And plenty of nightshade growing on them. We dried them for winter to cook. We did whatever we could to get some food. Our fathers were at the front and our mothers had their hands full trying to provide for the children. Life was hard. Everything was sent to the front.

The water in the aryl canals was brown from clay. We, kids, drank it, though it was unhealthy. I pretended it was 'cocoa.' There was a cemented open pool made in the village for potable water. It was called the 'house.' There were filters for cleaning the water. The director lived beside it. There was another 'house' for swimming. I learned to swim there. One day the younger daughter of the director of the house drowned in the pool of potable water. She was plump and didn't even sink to the bottom. Her body was taken out and the water was pumped out. It took them several days to

fill the pool as the water had to be filtered.

In summer, schoolchildren were taken to the cotton fields to gather caterpillars. We had bottles hanging on our necks to put the caterpillars in. Of course, there was no payment for the work. In fall we gathered cotton. We had to bring a certain weight back. We also took some cotton home. My mother removed the seeds to spin it for threads to make some clothes. I remember little about school. I became a pioneer [see All-Union pioneer organization] [15](#). All the schoolchildren became pioneers in the third grade. I was sociable. My friends were mostly the children in our yard. There were children of different ages, but we ran around and played together. I even learnt some curse words, but my mother didn't know about it, of course. In September 1944 I went to the fourth grade. We had a young teacher. She had just graduated from college and had no experience. Once she started explaining something about mathematics and I argued with her about it. I went home and said that I wouldn't go to school again. I didn't go to school for about three weeks, but we were getting ready to leave anyway.

In 1944, when Soroki was liberated, my father must have written a letter and we received a permit to go back home. My parents resigned from work, received all the necessary documents for the trip, and their work paid for the trip. We also had some bread given to us for the road. I remember that we went back on a freight train. Our trip lasted more than a month, as we were waiting for the trains heading to the front to pass by. When we were passing the Aral Sea we bought some salt. People said that there was lack of salt in Moldova.

We arrived in Soroki in early November 1944. Aunt Riva returned from the camp in Vinnitsa region before us. She told us about Grandmother Beila and Grandfather Borukh. They had perished in the camp from hunger and hardships in 1941. My grandfather left a good memory in Soroki. People came to us after the war for a long time grieving after my grandfather, 'Borukh, oh, Borukh!' When later those Jews who had been deported from Soroki before the war, began to return home, my father used to say that they were lucky. Those, who had stayed here, had perished. Of course, it was hard for them, when they were forced to leave their homes, but they weren't killed on purpose, while those, who stayed at home, were killed. They had no right to live according to the Nazi laws. My father worked at the Agricultural College in Soroki. My mother worked as a planning operator at the Soroki district agency of the local industry where she worked till 1947, when she retired and stayed at home. We were accommodated in my grandfather's house where Riva had two rooms. When we returned she was still in the army. The three of us lived in this tiny apartment which was 27 square meters. There were four other families living in my grandfather's home. The first secretary of the district party committee and his big family lived in this house. We got along well with them. Many Jews returned from evacuation.

## Post-war

I went to the fourth grade in Soroki. Our teacher, Yelena Fyodorovna, was very good to us. All the children liked her. I made friends with Ira Treiger. Before 1940 her family also lived in Bucharest. Ira's grandmother lived near Soroki. In 1940 her family went to Ira's grandmother on vacation. Ira's aunt and her adoptive daughter went with them. When the Soviet troops came to Bessarabia and closed the border, they stayed in Soroki. The aunt's husband, a Hungarian, stayed in Romania. Ira's aunt was a communist and had even been taken to camps for her underground activities. When the Great Patriotic War began, Ira's father was recruited to the front. Ira, her mother and grandmother

evacuated to Russia, I've forgotten the place. Her mother had tuberculosis and died. Ira's father perished at the front. Ira was raised by her aunt. I had another friend: Lusia Sivolobchik, a Belarussian. We studied and played together. Ira and I went to a music school, when we were in the fourth grade. We attended piano classes. In the ninth grade I stopped going to the music school. I had to prepare for college.

When we returned, the situation with food products was very hard. In the beginning we could have meals in the canteen at my father's workplace or take away food. My father usually ordered take-away and I went to pick it. The college was on a hill. When the ground was ice crusted, I managed to ascend the hill, but going back with those containers of food was quite tricky. I just sat on the ice and slid down. We had to wear miserable clothes. My mother wore my father's railroad uniform overcoat for a few years. There were American parcels delivered to my mother's workplace. The local authorities distributed food and clothes from these parcels. My mother once brought home American tinned meat and a summer dress for me. I don't remember it, though. In 1945 the war was over. All the people went onto the streets in Soroki on Victory Day [16](#). Many people were crying. Many of my classmates had lost their fathers, and some their mothers. Life was difficult. After finishing the seventh grade, many children went to vocational schools: medical school, agricultural school. In the late 1940s life began to improve gradually.

There was a Jewish, Russian and Moldovan population in Soroki. There were no conflicts. There was no anti-Semitism at school. There were many Jewish schoolchildren. The Soroki of my youth was a small green town on the bank of the Dnestr. I grew up on the Dnestr. I could swim well, but I couldn't jump from the tower. There was a hill outside the town. Therefore, the streets parallel to the Dnestr were longer and the crossing ones were shorter, two to three blocks between the Dnestr and the hill. Odesskaya Street led to the hill. There was a highway on it. There was a Christian church at the bottom of the hill. I remember, when some schoolchildren went to watch the Christmas service, there was a Komsomol [17](#) meeting at school. How did Komsomol members dare to go to church? I don't think there was a synagogue there.

There were two schools: a Russian secondary school named after Pushkin [18](#), in the two-storied former gymnasium building, and a Moldovan school, also two-storied. It also housed an evening school. There was a club where they showed movies and had dancing parties. We liked going to the movies, of course. We had parties at school. Later, a cinema theater was built in the town. There was a park in the center, and another park near my school. We went to school across the park. In winter we went to skate on the Dnestr. We read a lot and shared our opinions. We celebrated birthdays together. We often did our homework together also. Successful students helped their school mates who weren't so good at their studies. I helped my two friends, both had the name of Tamara, with mathematics.

When I was in the seventh grade, I visited one Jewish family teaching an older woman Russian. A number of people in Soroki could only speak Romanian or Yiddish. Komsomol members were given Komsomol chores to teach them Russian. I taught her for a whole year till she passed her exam successfully. I also was the editor of our school newspaper: I was responsible for reviewing articles which had been written by others, and also wrote myself. My favorite subjects were physics and mathematics. I liked literature, but I hated history. I had problems with remembering dates, and chronological tables were my weakness. We were in the ninth grade, when our favorite teacher of mathematics died. We didn't like the new teacher and made noise in his lessons. We were

fastidious. Our director wanted to offer my father to teach at our school part time. He was well known for his mathematical talents, though he taught technical subjects in his college, but I said, 'I don't want you to teach me. Let someone else do it.' They found a good teacher. His name was Nikolay Ivanovich Zadorozhnyi. He had graduated from Moscow State University. He had done a postgraduate course in Moscow.

I finished school with a silver medal in 1951. I had a '4' [out of 5] in Russian composition. I entered the Faculty of Physics of Kishinev University. School graduates having medals didn't have to take the entrance exams. My friend Ira Treiger failed to enter the university. She entered the Faculty of Mathematics of the Teachers' Training College. When I moved to Kishinev, I rented a room from Anna Mikhailovna, the cousin sister of our old acquaintance Dosia Marelskaya. She was a soloist of the Kishinev Opera Theater. In 1919 Anna Mikhailovna's teacher was Lipkovskaya [Lipkovskaya, Lidia Yakovlevna (1882 - 1958): Russian singer, she had a coloratura soprano, sang in the Mariinskiy Theater, lived abroad since 1919, mainly in France]. Her husband died and she lived alone in a communal apartment [19](#) where she had a small room where only her bed, my bed and a small table could fit. There was no kitchen. She had an electric stove in her room. There was a common bathroom and corridor in the apartment.

Other tenants were a doctor and his family: his cousin brother, a librarian, and his wife from Moscow. They were Jews. They all had tiny rooms. When the period of the Doctors' Plot [20](#) began in 1953, I remember that our neighbors had many discussions on this subject. They were indignant at the fact that Jews were persecuted without any grounds. Two doctors from Leningrad moved to Soroki to escape from this persecution. One was an obstetrician and the other a venerologist. One came with his wife and the other with his mother. Both were at the front. One of them had even lost his leg due to the war. They went to work in Soroki and were accepted well. There were no demonstrations of anti-Semitism in our university. We had a real international student body there: Russian, Moldovan, Jewish and Ukrainian. We had friends and common interests, but nationality was never an issue. All were equal. When Stalin died [in 1953], we cried. There were mourning meetings at the university. Some crazy students even went to his funeral in Moscow. This was the kind of enthusiasm at that time.

We had four lectures every day and laboratory classes two or three times a week. We were even a little jealous about the philologists and historians: those 'chatter boxes' easily got '5' marks in their exams. However, we still managed to go to the cinema or theater. I liked classical music and attended all the concerts at the philharmonic. I never missed one premiere in the theaters in Kishinev. I also attended the performances where Anna Mikhailovna sang. There was a choir and theatrical group at the theater, but I didn't go there. Our boys were fond of football. They went to all the football games at the republican stadium near our dormitory. At times they stood in queues for nights to get tickets. If they failed to get tickets they came to our dormitory to watch the matches from the windows or sitting on the roof. We had parties at the university and often got together. When we were senior students we arranged parties with students from Odessa and Lvov Universities. I always spent my vacations in Soroki. I had friends there and we went to the Dnestr in summer.

I graduated from the university in 1956, and received a diploma with honors. I got a job assignment [see mandatory job assignment in the USSR] [21](#) to Soroki, as per my request. I worked at a school. I hated teaching, but there weren't many enterprises in Moldova. It was hard to get a job even in

Kishinev. All our graduates went to work in schools. In the 1950s they started building factories and plants in Moldova. The ones they were constructing didn't require significant raw materials: they were garment factories and instrument manufacturing plants. I worked for the three required years at the school and when the Scientific Research Institute of Instrument Making opened in Kishinev in late 1959, I went to work there. Our laboratory dealt in scientific research in the domain of instrument making, and each employee developed his/her subject. We had a great team at the laboratory. We celebrated holidays: Soviet holidays, and birthdays, together. Anti-Semitism was just out of the question. I rented an apartment in Kishinev. There I met Ivan Barbul, my landlord's relative. He was my husband to be.

My husband was born into a religious Jewish family in Rezina in 1929. His name was Isaac Rybakov then. His father, Grigoriy Rybakov, was a teacher at a cheder, and his mother, Feiga Rybakova, was a housewife. There were seven children in the family: Abram, Anyuta, Moisey, Nehoma, Riva, Betia, Isaac, and Shmil. Anyuta joined a group of chalutzim to go to Palestine in 1935. During the war, Ivan's parents and four younger children were taken at first to Odessa [today Ukraine]. They couldn't evacuate from there. Ivan's parents, Betia, Riva and Shmil, perished in the camp in Bogdanovka [a village in Nikolaev region where during the war a camp for Jews with 54,000 inmates was. In Bogdanovka all the Jews were shot, by the Romanian gendarmerie, the Ukrainian police, and Sonderkommando R, made up of Volksdeutsche].

Isaac managed to escape from Bogdanovka and returned to the ghetto in Odessa. He escaped several times from the spots of mass shootings. He took hiding under various names, worked as a shepherd in the Ukrainian village of Gandrabury, Ananiev district, Odessa region. In 1943 Ivan Ilich Barbul, a local villager, and his wife Agafia adopted him. They gave him their family name and named him Ivan. In 1944, immediately after Odessa was liberated, Ivan's adoptive father was recruited to the Soviet army. He perished near Iasi. Ivan stayed in Gandrabury and finished secondary school. His older brother Abram perished at the front near Konigsberg [today Russia] in 1945. His sister Nehoma lived in Chernovtsy. His brother Moisey and his family live in Kishinev. Ivan graduated from the Faculty of Mathematics of Kishinev Pedagogical College. He worked as a mathematics teacher in the village of Raspopeny and later became director of a school.

We met and began to correspond. When Ivan visited Kishinev we spent time together. In summer 1961 we took a boat from Odessa to the Crimea. We arrived at Yalta and then traveled all over the Crimea. We stayed in Gurzuf, took two days climbing mountains, walked to Alushta and went to Yevpatoria. In May 1962 we got married. We had a civil ceremony in the registry office. My colleagues came to congratulate me. They gave us a vacuum cleaner for our wedding. They came to the registry office with this vacuum cleaner in a huge box. I didn't want a big wedding. Even my parents didn't come on this day. We went home from the registry office and made a 'bedlam' there: we laid the table, there was a lot of noise, it was fun. During the following week our relatives and older acquaintances came to congratulate us. Then we went to Soroki where my parents invited their acquaintances.

We rented an apartment. Before my baby's due date in May 1963 I went to my mother in Soroki. At this moment there was a distribution of apartments at my workplace. I received a one-bedroom 'Khrushchovka' [22](#) apartment on the fifth floor. My husband moved into this apartment. He took our folding bed, books and vacuum cleaner into the apartment: this was all we had. Then he went to Soroki. Later, our neighbors told us that before turning on the gas supply the gas agency



employees were to come into each apartment to check the safety, and they were stunned, when they entered our apartment seeing heaps of books, a folding bed and vacuum cleaner. Our neighbors also told me that they were surprised. I arrived two months later with Alexandr. By that time Ivan had bought some furniture: a cot, table and chairs. He also bought a cupboard and a few chairs for the kitchen. At that time it was difficult to buy fridges. My mother gave me hers.

When Alexandr turned one year old, my maternity leave was over and I had to go back to work. I sent Alexandr to my mother and returned her fridge. Then Alexandr came back, and the fridge arrived also. So we sent him to and fro with his baby's basin and the fridge until we finally managed to buy a fridge. My parents helped me a lot. Alexandr went to the kindergarten, but he often had angina and had to stay home. Alexandr was very sociable and liked going to the kindergarten. Even on Saturdays, when he didn't have to go there, he still asked whether he could go. We often went to Soroki. Then my mother began to be ill, and I went to Soroki every Saturday. Ivan was studying at the postgraduate school at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow. He received a postgraduate student's salary and I received my salary and in this way we made our living.

I occasionally went to see Ivan in Moscow. In those few days we went to all the art exhibitions and theaters. In 1968, Ivan defended a candidate's dissertation and went to work as a senior scientific employee at the Scientific Research Institute of Pedagogic in Kishinev. I became chief of the laboratory at my institute and started working on my candidate's dissertation. In January 1969 I achieved my candidate's dissertation and was awarded my scientific degree of a candidate of technical sciences. In fall that year Alexandr needed a surgery on his tonsils. Two months later, in December, my second son Boris was born. My parents came to be with me at that time. There were six of us crowded in this room. Once, Alexandr contracted flu in his kindergarten. My mother was so worried that Boris and I might contract it and separated Alexandr with wet towels from us. However, we all got it. A few years later we received a two-bedroom apartment in Ryshkanovka, a new district in Kishinev.

I stayed for four months at home, and then my staff forced me back to work. We had some complicated order to complete urgently. My mother stayed with Boris until he turned three, and then I had to send him to a kindergarten. Boris hated going to the kindergarten. He was an individualist. On his way to the kindergarten he screamed so loudly that all the housewives looked out of their windows in Ryshkanovka, 'What's going on? Why is this child screaming?' Shortly before he had to go to school we took another try, so that the boy could adjust to the children's collectives. My husband's acquaintances, teachers, came to talk to him and convinced him to go to the kindergarten. My husband made an arrangement with the director of the kindergarten: they invited Boris to morning parties and gave him presents. He finally agreed, 'So you will go to the kindergarten?' 'I will', but on the next day he refused bluntly, 'I'm not going!' 'But you promised!' 'I promised, but I've changed my mind.' However, he had no problems with his academic performance. He studied well, was particularly good at mathematics, but not so good at the Russian language. Like our older son, Boris studied in a mathematical class. I'm a physicist and my husband is a mathematician, and both our sons had a talent to mathematics. Or, perhaps, Grandfather Borukh's genes worked.

We spent our summer vacations with our children at the shore of the Black Sea. We rented an apartment in Chernomorka in Odessa. It was convenient as the sea and town were close by. We

usually rented an apartment from the same landlady, but if she had other tenants at that moment, she helped us get accommodation elsewhere. When the children grew older, we went to the Ministry of Education of Moldova camp in Karolino-Bugaz [today Ukraine]. There was a building of a boarding school in Kishinev for children to spend their summers in the camp, and there was a tented camp nearby. We all stayed in the tents for two weeks. Later, they built wooden houses. This was perfect for the boys: they swam and lay in the sun. We always tried to involve the boys in sports, went to contests, played volleyball, at one time I was fond of shooting and attended a shooting gallery. We got together with friends and went to the cinema and theaters. We have a big collection of books in Russian. We like reading. In 1978 my parents moved to Kishinev. They exchanged their apartment in Soroki for one in Kishinev. My mother died in late March 1988. We buried her in the Jewish section of the Doina [cemetery in Kishinev]. My father lived four years longer. He died in February 1992. He was also buried in the Doina.

After finishing school in 1979, Alexandr entered the Faculty of Biology of Moscow State University. When he was a fourth-year student he married his co-student Tatiana Yailenko in January 1983. She is from Donetsk [today Ukraine]. Her mother is Ukrainian and her father Greek. She is a very smart and gentle girl. They had their wedding in the dormitory of Moscow State University. Tatiana's parents, her sister, my husband, Boris and I attended their wedding. The wedding party lasted three days and three nights. It took place during the winter exams, so they also sat for their exams. In December their son Lyonia [affectionate for Leonid] was born. Tatiana was a fifth-year student. She took an academic leave and graduated from the university one year after Alexandr. Alexandr finished a postgraduate course in Moscow. In 1988 they moved to Kishinev. By that time, we had built a three-bedroom cooperative apartment, and our children moved into our former furnished two-bedroom apartment. Alexandr went to work at the Academy of Sciences of Moldova.

My younger son Boris graduated from the Faculty of Physics of Kishinev University. He worked at the Scientific Research Institute of instrument making. He became a senior scientific employee at my institute. He still works there. He is single.

In 1992 my husband and I went to visit his brother Moisey Rybakov in Israel. I've always sympathized with Israel. I'm certain that Jews must have their own state. I agree with Solzhenitsyn [23](#) that Jews had so many problems, because they didn't have a land of their own. Now they have it. My husband and I kept listening to the radio during the Six-Day-War [24](#) and the War of Judgment Day [see Yom Kippur War] [25](#). I think they should look for a peaceful way of resolving the conflict with the Arabs. I've always respected Yitzhak Rabin: as a politician, he was a wise man and made a great contribution into the establishment of peace in Israel. His death was a tragedy for the whole of Israel. This was a wonderfully interesting trip. We traveled all over the country. In Jerusalem we were sure to visit Yad Vashem [26](#). We both lost our dear ones during World War II. We visited all our relatives in Israel. Stores in Israel had plenty of goods while here in Moldova there was such desolation after the breakup of the USSR: empty stores; if they had eggs for sale, there were queues and people bought large quantities to fill up their stock of eggs at home. There were cards to buy clothes. There were anti-Russian demonstrations in Moldova: young fascist-oriented people tore off awards from the clothes of veterans of the Great Patriotic War, and people were afraid of speaking Russian in the streets.

In 1993, Alexandr moved to Leningrad to work at the biophysical laboratory at the Academic Institute. He divorced Tatiana and left her their apartment. We keep in touch with Tatiana. She is a

wonderful person. Lyonia often visits us. He is a student of the Faculty of Mathematics of Kishinev University. Alexandr remarried in Leningrad. His second wife, Olga Ivanova, is Russian. Their salaries are hardly enough to make ends meet. It's just enough to commute by metro to and from work. During that time, representatives of Israel went for a scientific conference to Leningrad. They offered Alexandr a job by his specialty at the university in Tel Aviv. Olga followed him. In 1997, their son Ilia was born. At that time I was bedridden with my leg fractured. I broke it in early 1997. Olga had to go to work and I went to Israel to look after my grandson. I retired in 1993, at the age of 60. I stayed there for three months. I walked with a stick, but I visited all my relatives: my father's sisters and nephews had moved to Israel by then.

There is a booming Jewish life in Kishinev now, but I'm not actively involved in it. I occasionally go to the Jewish library, but actually I have many books at home. Hesed [27](#) Jehudah supports us. Once a month we receive food parcels. We turned them down at the beginning. We thought there were poorer Jews than us, but we are growing older and life isn't getting any easier. Sometimes we receive medications from Hesed and have a free medical check up. We keep thinking about moving to our dear ones in Israel.

## Glossary

### **1 Bessarabia**

Historical area between the Prut and Dnestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

### **2 Great Patriotic War**

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

### **3 Annexation of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union**

At the end of June 1940 the Soviet Union demanded Romania to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia and to abandon the territory. Romania withdrew its troops and administration in the same month and between 28th June and 3rd July, the Soviets occupied the region. At the same time Romania was obliged to give up Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern-Dobrudja to Bulgaria. These territorial losses influenced Romanian politics during World War II to a great extent.

#### **4 Russian Revolution of 1917**

Revolution in which the tsarist regime was overthrown in the Russian Empire and, under Lenin, was replaced by the Bolshevik rule. The two phases of the Revolution were: February Revolution, which came about due to food and fuel shortages during World War I, and during which the tsar abdicated and a provisional government took over. The second phase took place in the form of a coup led by Lenin in October/November (October Revolution) and saw the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

#### **5 Realschule**

Secondary school for boys. Students studied mathematics, physics, natural history, foreign languages and drawing. After finishing this school they could enter higher industrial and agricultural educational institutions.

#### **6 Item 5**

This was the nationality factor, which was included on all job application forms, Jews, who were considered a separate nationality in the Soviet Union, were not favored in this respect from the end of World War II until the late 1980s.

#### **7 Soviet/Russian doctorate degrees**

Graduate school in the Soviet Union (aspirantura, or ordinatura for medical students), which usually took about 3 years and resulted in a dissertation. Students who passed were awarded a 'kandidat nauk' (lit. candidate of sciences) degree. If a person wanted to proceed with his or her research, the next step would be to apply for a doctorate degree (doktorantura). To be awarded a doctorate degree, the person had to be involved in the academia, publish consistently, and write an original dissertation. In the end he/she would be awarded a 'doctor nauk' (lit. doctor of sciences) degree.

#### **8 Perestroika (Russian for restructuring)**

Soviet economic and social policy of the late 1980s, associated with the name of Soviet politician Mikhail Gorbachev. The term designated the attempts to transform the stagnant, inefficient command economy of the Soviet Union into a decentralized, market-oriented economy. Industrial managers and local government and party officials were granted greater autonomy, and open elections were introduced in an attempt to democratize the Communist Party organization. By 1991, perestroika was declining and was soon eclipsed by the dissolution of the USSR.

#### **9 Pechora camp**

On 11th November 1941 the civil governor of Transnistria issued the deportation of Jews. A camp for Jewish residents of Tulchin (3,005 in total) was established in the village of Pechora, Vinnitsya region in December 1941. This is known as the 'Dead Loop'. In total about 9,000 people from various towns in Vinnitsya region were kept in the camp. They were accommodated in the former 2-storied recreation center building. There were up to 50 tenants in one room. No provisions were made for the most basic necessities of the inmates. Inmates hardly got any food and the building had no heating. About 2,500 Jews were taken away by Germans for forced labor. None of them

returned; they all died from forced labor beyond their strength, lack of food, hunger and diseases. In March 1944 Soviet troops liberated the camp. There were 1,550 survivors left in the camp.

## **10 Five percent quota**

In tsarist Russia the number of Jews in higher educational institutions could not exceed 5% of the total number of students.

## **11 Sovkhoz**

state-run agricultural enterprise. The first sovkhoz yards were created in the USSR in 1918. According to the law the sovkhoz property was owned by the state, but it was assigned to the sovkhoz which handled it based on the right of business maintenance.

## **12 Card system**

The food card system regulating the distribution of food and industrial products was introduced in the USSR in 1929 due to extreme deficit of consumer goods and food. The system was cancelled in 1931. In 1941, food cards were reintroduced to keep records, distribute and regulate food supplies to the population. The card system covered main food products such as bread, meat, oil, sugar, salt, cereals, etc. The rations varied depending on which social group one belonged to, and what kind of work one did. Workers in the heavy industry and defense enterprises received a daily ration of 800 g (miners - 1 kg) of bread per person; workers in other industries 600 g. Non-manual workers received 400 or 500 g based on the significance of their enterprise, and children 400 g. However, the card system only covered industrial workers and residents of towns while villagers never had any provisions of this kind. The card system was cancelled in 1947.

## **13 Kulaks**

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

## **14 Annexation of Eastern Poland**

According to a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact defining Soviet and German territorial spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland in September 1939. In early November the newly annexed lands were divided up between the Ukrainian and the Belarusian Soviet Republics.

## **15 All-Union pioneer organization**

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/ girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.



## **16 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)**

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

## **17 Komsomol**

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

## **18 Pushkin, Alexandr (1799-1837)**

Russian poet and prose writer, among the foremost figures in Russian literature. Pushkin established the modern poetic language of Russia, using Russian history for the basis of many of his works. His masterpiece is Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse about mutually rejected love. The work also contains witty and perceptive descriptions of Russian society of the period. Pushkin died in a duel.

## **19 Communal apartment**

The Soviet power wanted to improve housing conditions by requisitioning 'excess' living space of wealthy families after the Revolution of 1917. Apartments were shared by several families with each family occupying one room and sharing the kitchen, toilet and bathroom with other tenants. Because of the chronic shortage of dwelling space in towns communal or shared apartments continued to exist for decades. Despite state programs for the construction of more houses and the liquidation of communal apartments, which began in the 1960s, shared apartments still exist today.

## **20 Doctors' Plot**

The Doctors' Plot was an alleged conspiracy of a group of Moscow doctors to murder leading government and party officials. In January 1953, the Soviet press reported that nine doctors, six of whom were Jewish, had been arrested and confessed their guilt. As Stalin died in March 1953, the trial never took place. The official paper of the Party, the Pravda, later announced that the charges against the doctors were false and their confessions obtained by torture. This case was one of the worst anti-Semitic incidents during Stalin's reign. In his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 Khrushchev stated that Stalin wanted to use the Plot to purge the top Soviet leadership.

## **21 Mandatory job assignment in the USSR**

Graduates of higher educational institutions had to complete a mandatory 2-year job assignment issued by the institution from which they graduated. After finishing this assignment young people

were allowed to get employment at their discretion in any town or organization.

## **22 Khrushchovka**

Five-storied apartment buildings with small one, two or three-bedroom apartments, named after Nikita Khrushchev, head of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. These apartment buildings were constructed in the framework of Khrushchev's program of cheap dwelling in the new neighborhood of most Soviet cities.

## **23 Solzhenitsyn, Alexander (1918-)**

Russian novelist and publicist. He spent eight years in prisons and labor camps, and three more years in enforced exile. After the publication of a collection of his short stories in 1963, he was denied further official publication of his work, and so he circulated them clandestinely, in samizdat publications, and published them abroad. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 and was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974 after publishing his famous book, *The Gulag Archipelago*, in which he describes Soviet labor camps.

## **24 Six-Day-War**

The first strikes of the Six-Day-War happened on 5th June 1967 by the Israeli Air Force. The entire war only lasted 132 hours and 30 minutes. The fighting on the Egyptian side only lasted four days, while fighting on the Jordanian side lasted three. Despite the short length of the war, this was one of the most dramatic and devastating wars ever fought between Israel and all of the Arab nations. This war resulted in a depression that lasted for many years after it ended. The Six-Day-War increased tension between the Arab nations and the Western World because of the change in mentalities and political orientations of the Arab nations.

## **25 Yom Kippur War**

The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, also known as the Yom Kippur War or the Ramadan War, was a war between Israel on one side and Egypt and Syria on the other side. It was the fourth major military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. The war lasted for three weeks: it started on 6th October 1973 and ended on 22nd October on the Syrian front and on 26th October on the Egyptian front.

## **26 Yad Vashem**

This museum, founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, honors both Holocaust martyrs and 'the Righteous Among the Nations', non-Jewish rescuers who have been recognized for their 'compassion, courage and morality'.

## **27 Hesed**

Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and

particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.