Boris Molodetski

Boris Molodetski is a shortish lively man. He has a swarthy smiling face with shrewd eyes. If he finds the subject of discussion interesting he livens up, often bursts into laughter. He likes to baffle his companion asking a humorous question all of a sudden. Boris likes to express himself using rhetorical bookish language. One can tell that he has read and knows a lot. He spoke about his life with great enthusiasm. He has compiled a family photo album with great love and he collects biographical materials about all relatives. Boris lives alone in a 3-bedroom apartment on the 4th floor in Kotovskiy settlement, the farthest district in Odessa. He has only the most necessary pieces of furniture manufactured in the 1980s. Everything is ideally clean and orderly in this dwelling. Boris is a hospitable and gallant host.

My family background

My paternal great great grandfather according to the family legend owned a tavern or an inn in a town near Uman in the early 19th century. During the Karmalyuk uprising the rebels killed his whole family. [Ustim Karmalyuk, 1787-1835, leader of anti-serfdom movement in Pravoberezhnaya Ukraine. In 1832-35 he was leader of a peasants' uprising in Podolia.] Only his 15-year old daughter survived. She was my great grandmother. Her name is not known, but we know that she was born in 1820. She became mute from grief, but she was very beautiful and a Jewish man with a Polish surname of Molodetski proposed to her. The Jewish community of the town provided dowry to her as they would to orphan girls. She became the mother of 12 sons.

One of them named Moishe-Leib Molodetski, was my grandfather. He was born in 1857 in Uman town where he married Rieva Mezhburd. In the 1890s the family moved to Grosulovo town. [Grosulovo: a town in Tiraspol district, Kherson region. In 1987 its population was 2 088 residents, 1 201 of them were Jews.] My mother and I spent our summer vacations there. My grandmother Rieva Molodetskaya died in 1921 and I never saw her, but I remember my grandfather very well. My grandfather and his family lived in a pise-walled house with thatched roof. There were two steps down the hallway and the rooms in the house were below the ground level. There were five

rooms. I can only remember the bedroom. There were a timber wormed a wooden bed and a wardrobe in the bedroom. It wasn't a poor house since there were wooden floors in it. (For example, the floors in my grandfather daughters' houses were ground. My aunts applied clay with ochre on them every day. There were lots of fleas on the floors and they kept absinth on them, but it didn't work well.) There was a terrible mess in my grandfather's kitchen. The yard was also poorly kept. There was a small vegetable garden near the house. There was a cane-structured toilet in the yard. Grandfather Moishe kept two cows selling milk and dairies to his neighbors. My grandfather was deeply religious. His co-villagers called him 'tzaddik'. He had taught in the cheder until Soviet authorities closed it in 1922.

My grandfather tried to teach me prayers, but in vain. I remember how my grandfather put on his tallit and tefillin to pray. There was a synagogue in Grosulovo and my grandfather tried to take me there, but I didn't want to go with him. He dressed as a Jewish man should: a long black kitel, a black vest and a black quadrangular cloak with tassels on edges. He wore a black cap and a greasy kippah underneath. My grandfather's true faith also expressed itself by the fact that he never shaved in his life, was never photographed or went to the cinema. After his wife died my grandfather remarried in 1922. His second wife's name was Yenta, but everybody called her Anna at home. I remember that she was a bustling housewife. Grandfather Moishe died in Grosulovo in 1939. He was buried there. Yenta perished during the Great Patriotic War 1 in 1941 in Bogdanovka [village in Nikolaev region where during the war a camp for Jews with 54,000 inmates was. In Bogdanovka all the Jews were shot, with the Romanian gendarmerie, the Ukrainian police, and Sonderkommando R, made up of Volksdeutsche]. Yenta didn't have children. My grandfather Leib and grandmother Rieva had five children, born in Grosulovo.

Basia, the oldest, was born in 1886. She had no education. In the 1910s she married a Jewish man from Petroverovka village in 35 km from Grosulovo. His name was Shika Broitman. She moved to her husband. They had few cows that provided food for their family. Basia had four children: sons Nyuma and Shaika and daughters Raya and Rieva. Shika Broitman died in 1929 at the age of 40. After Shika died grandfather Moishe moved the cows to Grosulovo and took Rieva and her children to his home. Few years later Basia married a widower name Roitershtein. He had no children. During collectivization 2 authorities demanded that they gave their cows to kolkhoz, but Basia managed to stand for one cow for the family. Roitershtein was a cheese maker and worked in a kolkhoz 3 decently. Even in 1933, when the children starved [during the famine in Ukraine] 4, he didn't steal from the kolkhoz and didn't allow the others to steal. Basia wasn't deeply religious, but on Saturday she went to the synagogue. Her older son Nyuma finished a flour grinding school in Odessa. He worked somewhere in Bashkiria where he married a girl from Bashkiria. Raya went to work as a typist in court in Odessa after finishing a 7-year school. In 1940 she married a military man and they moved to Lithuania. That same year her daughter Shura was born. When the Great Patriotic War began Raya and her daughter evacuated to the rear and her husband perished at the front in 1941. Nyuma also perished at the front in the first months of the war. In August 1941 Basia, her stepmother Yenta, her husband, son Shaika and daughter Rieva who came home on vacation after finishing her first year in Odessa Medical College escaped from Grosulovo in a horse-driven wagon. In 18 kilometers from Nikolaev German tanks barred the escapists' way. They got into a Jewish camp in Bogdanovka. Romanians treated tem more loyally than Germans, but they took away their valuables. They hardly got any food and every day another group of Jews was taken away to be shot. Yenta, Basia, her husband and son Shaika were shot on 21 December 1941.

When Soviet troops were approaching in 1944 Romanians dismissed the camp and Rieva survived. After the war she finished the Medical College in Odessa and got a [mandatory] job assignment 5 in Kazakhstan. She got married and had two sons: Sasha and Yura. I didn't know her husband. They divorced and she moved to Moldavia with her children. Rieva now lives with her older son Sasha's family in Lugansk. She looks after her grandson. Sasha is an entrepreneur. Her younger son Yuri, an engineer, perished in Kishinev in 1993 when he was hang-gliding. Basia's older daughter Raya returned to Odessa from evacuation. She worked as a typist in NKVD 6 office. In the middle of 1950s she married a widower whose name I don't know. They moved to Kishinev. Raya died in 1989. Her daughter Shura and her husband moved to America a long time ago. I don't have any information about them.

My father's sister Surah was born in 1888. Surah, the only one of her sisters, had some elementary education. She married Solomon Shechterman. In 1919 their son Shmil was born and in 1921 daughter Mara was born. Aunt Surah was very good at sewing. On Sunday, market day, their house located across the street from the church was full: village women gave their orders to Surah. I remember Surah when she was a woman with grayish hair and her tapeline, wearing glasses with the kindest eyes behind them. There was a Ukrainian and a Jewish collective farm 7 in Grosulovo before the Great Patriotic War. Solomon worked in the council of the Jewish kolkhoz. He was a smart man and they had quite a good life. During the Great Patriotic War aunt Surah's family evacuated to Samarkand. Shmil finished the Water Engineering College and stayed to work there. Mara married Shmil's co-student in Samarkand. I don't know his surname. She and her husband moved to Arkhangelsk and then to Leningrad. In 1944 their daughter Sopha was born and in 1948 their son Lyonia was born. Surah and her husband lived with their daughter's family in Leningrad. Solomon died from lung cancer in 1952 and Surah died from her heart failure two years later. They were both buried in Leningrad. Shmil came to Odessa in 1945. Here he married Bella Melamud. I went to their wedding. They had a Jewish wedding secretly. There were tables set for the wedding party in somebody's apartment and there was a rabbi and a chuppah. In 1946 their daughter Ira was born and in 1950 their son Marik was born. In the 1970s Shmil and his family moved to Israel. He died in 1986 and was buried in Haifa. His sister Mara, her daughter Sopha and grandson also moved to Haifa where they live now. Mara's son Lyonia works as a psychologist in a center of psychological rehabilitation in Petersburg.

My father's brother Isaac was born in Grosulovo in 1895. He studied in cheder. Since 1925 Isaac lived in Odessa. My father gave him a room in our apartment. Isaac worked in commerce. In our family he had a reputation of a light-minded man. He enjoyed good company, liked singing and courting ladies. He married Zhenia Sharapan, a Jewish woman. She worked in commerce. In 1928 their son Solomon was born and in 1935 their daughter Rachil was born. After his daughter was born Isaac received a vacant apartment in our house. During the Great Patriotic War Isaac's family lived in Tashkent. Uncle Isaac wasn't recruited to the front due to his health condition. After the war they returned to Odessa. We didn't communicate with them much. His wife worked in the department store in Deribassovskaya Street. She died in the 1950s. Their son Solomon died of stomach ulcer in 1964 at the age of 36. At the end of his life Isaac became deeply religious and spent his days at the synagogue. He died in 1974. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery and Jews from the community recited a memorial prayer. After he died his daughter Rachil and her family moved to Israel.

My father's brother Yolik was born in 1897. He received elementary education in Grosulovo. In 1927 Yolik, his wife Lisa, their son Mulia and daughter Rieva came to Odessa. They settled down in a damp room in the basement in #107, Bolshaya Arnautskaya Street. There was running water in this room, but no other comforts. Yolik went to work as a janitor at first and then as a storekeeper at a fruit and vegetable storage facility. Before the war he and his family moved to an apartment in Knizhny Lane. Yolik was a nice and a hearty man. His wife Lisa was the best cook ever. She always made excellent food for family celebrations. After her guests left she did the cleaning and washing even if it took her until morning to finish. I haven't seen such housewives in my life again. I remember Lisa's cooking: her gefilte fish and strudels for Pesach. However, their family wasn't religious. When the Great Patriotic War began Yolik's son Mulia was recruited to the army and perished during defense of Odessa. Yolik's family was in evacuation in a kolkhoz near Tashkent. Uncle Yolik was an infantry sergeant. He was a regiment logistics assistant. Once uncle Yolik asked soldiers to pick wheat grains on a field, brought a stone mill from an abandoned mill, found bakers in a village and provided excellent white bread to the regiment for two weeks. In 1943 he demobilized and took his wife and daughter to Odessa. After the war uncle Yolik worked as assistant chief of a fruit and vegetable storage base. Rieva married Abram Topchinski, a Jewish man. Abram was sales manager at the Odessa resistance unit plant. They had two sons: Roma and Igor. In 1962 uncle Yolik fell ill with stomach cancer. He died in 1964. I was at his funeral in the Jewish cemetery. Old Jews from the community recited a memorial prayer. Yolik's wife Lisa died in 1975. Rieva's family moved to America in 1993. They live in San Diego. Her sons keep few vehicles for transportation of handicapped to a polyclinic. Rieva died of breast cancer in 1994. Her husband Abram lives with his sons.

My father Gersh Molodetski was born in Grosulovo in 1891. The whole family built up their hopes with him as an older son. He studied in cheder and later learned to read and write in Russian by himself. My grandfather wanted him to become a rabbi and sent him to yeshivah in Kishinev when he turned 16. After studying there a year my father decided he didn't like it and ran away to Odessa. He stayed at the railway station in Odessa. He had no documents until Odessa police office issued a temporary residential permit to him. He managed to find a job. In 1912 my father was recruited to the army. At first he served in an artillery unit in a fortress in Vladivostok and in 1913 he moved to Kharbin. In spring 1917 their regiment was sent to the Southern Front. When the train was in about 30 km from Grosulovo my father jumped off and walked to his village: he deserted the army. Nobody searched him. During the Civil War 8, in 1918 he was in a group of a self-defense unit consisting of local residents who were trying to defend their town from gangs 9 raging in the vicinity. Once bandits requested a truce envoy to be sent to them. My father went there carrying a white cloth. They didn't reach any agreement, but when my father was on his way back they wounded him in his leg. In late 1918 my father moved to Odessa. His acquaintance from Grosulovo let him stay in his dwelling and helped him to become an assistant accountant apprentice. Shortly afterward my father met my mother. I don't know any details.

My maternal grandfather Ber Yeschin was born approximately in the 1850s in the town of Sosnitsa of Chernigov province. He was a widower. His children from the first marriage son Lyonia and daughter Nora communicated with their stepsisters. During the Civil War Lyonia Yeschin moved to America. I saw him in 1977 when my wife and I visited aunt Minna in Miami. Nora Yeschina worked as a doctor in the tuberculosis clinic in Odessa, in the 1980s she and her husband Erik moved to Boston, USA. She died in 2002. This is all I know about them.

Grandfather Ber and his second wife Matlia and their five children lived in the town of Sosnitsa of Chernigov province. Later they moved to Odessa where they lived in a poor apartment in Bolgarskaya Street. Three more daughters were born there. I don't know my grandfather's profession. They said grandfather Ber was very religious and never got photographed since his faith didn't allow this. However, when his favorite daughter Minna moved to America he broke the rule and had his photograph made to send her the picture. This is all information I have about my grandfather after whom I was named. He died long before I was born. It happened on 15 July 1914 in Odessa. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery.

My maternal grandmother Matlia Yeschina was born in the 1860s in the town of Sosnitsa of Chernigov province. Her maiden name was Garbovitzer. My grandmother finished a public school. In 1927 my grandmother went to visit her daughters in America, but since she left her five daughters here she returned in 1930. Grandmother Matlia lived in the neighboring house in an apartment with her two single daughters. Grandmother Matlia knew Yiddish, but she usually spoke Russian. She wore black clothes and a black shawl. At home she wore a kerchief. She was very religious. On Yom Kippur, when grandmother Matlia spent all day through at the synagogue and fasted she got so weak that my mother and I went to the synagogue to pick her up and had to lead her by her elbows two blocks. She had special crockery to use at Pesach, but she was the only one to use it since her daughters were not religious and didn't observe these traditions. When the war began grandmother Matlia didn't want to evacuate however hard her daughters tried to convince her. She said 'Be what may'. Her younger daughter Ghenia stayed with her. My neighbors told me afterward that when Romanians came they took them along with other Jews to powder storages in Tolbukhin Street and burned them in autumn 1941.

My mother's older sister Betia was born in Sosnitsa in 1883. She got married in Odessa and in 1907 she and her husband moved to America. Her single sister Sonia, born in 1885, went with her. We have no information about them.

My mother's sister Nechama was born in Sosnitsa in 1987. She got married in Odessa. Her husband David Valter, a tailor, was a communist of the Lenin's appeal, which means that he joined the Party in 1924, the year when Lenin 10 died. They lived in Odessa and were very poor. In 1923 their son Boris was born. I remember that my parents always gave them some food. When in the early 1930s they declared the establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Republic David was one of the first to take his family to Birobidjan 11. They had a very miserable life there. Nechama died in Birobidjan in 1947. David and his son Boris moved to Samarkand. Boris was an adventurist. After the war he worked as an insurance agent. He appropriated something, escaped from punishment and presented himself to me in Odessa asking me to help him go to the army. He almost put me in danger of arrest. I terminated my communication with him.

My mother's sister Minna was born in Sosnitsa in 1893. She moved to America in 1912. She married Danil Leonidov who emigrated from the town of Khashchevato, Kirovograd region. Danil lived in France before the revolution. He was a socialist and listened to Lenin's lectures in Longjumeau near Paris. In America he tried many jobs, but he was a failure. He owned a fur store in New York, but went bankrupt. Then he tried to open a recreation center in Miami, but failed. Minna worked as a medical nurse and somehow kept the situation under control. They didn't have any children. My mother corresponded with Minna. She was afraid that this might have an impact on my military career and she mailed her letters to Minna husband's sisters in Khashchevato from

where they mailed them in their envelopes to Minna. Minna supported her sisters in Odessa. In 1930 she bought a trip to the USSR for the only reason that the route included Odessa. I saw her then. We all cried. She had a room in Londonskaya hotel, but she stayed with grandmother Matlia. Minna brought three suitcases of presents for all of us. She gave my father a gray suit with vinous stripes. After World War II my mother altered this suit and made a coat for herself and then she altered it again making a coat for my son. It looked nice. Some time in 1970 Danil died. My wife and I visited Minna in 1977. She died in 1986.

My mother's sister Mary was born in Odessa in 1900. She had some education. In the early 1920s aunt Mary who was one of the best employees in the garment industry in an enterprise in Odessa, was elected a member of the town council. Aunt Mary wore trendy clothes that she made herself. She got married at the age of 30 in 1934. Mary's husband Rafail Khromoy was born in Khahchevato village, Kirovograd region in 1902. We have a picture of his mother Dvoira Khromaya in our family album. Rafail worked in the Zagotzerno [grain supplies] system and I suspect he did some dealing and wheeling there. In 1935 their daughter Ella was born. During the Great Patriotic War Ella and her daughter evacuated. Ella worked in a kolkhoz near Tashkent. Rafail flatly refused to evacuate hoping to start his own business when Germans came. His neighbors told us that he perished in the ghetto. After the war Mary and her daughter returned to Odessa. Aunt Mary worked at the garment factory. Ella finished 7 years at school and went to work in the sales department of the resistance unit plant. Ella married Victor Levin, a Jewish man. Victor worked in the accounting office at the plant and did some swindling ; he paid salaries under forged payrolls. He was imprisoned for doing this. Aunt Mary died of lung cancer in 1968. Ella and her children – her husband had died before – moved to New Zealand in 1980 and then to Sydney.

My mother's sister Sheva was born in Odessa in 1905. She studied in a Jewish elementary school where she also learned to sew. She was single. She wasn't religious. During the Great Patriotic War she evacuated and worked in a kolkhoz near Tashkent. After the war she returned to Odessa and worked as leading knitwear modeler at the garment factory. There was a knitwear store in Paster Street where aunt Sheva had an office. She was making garments for exhibitions. Once in the middle of the 1960s she was invited to an exhibition in Marseilles, but she flatly refused to go there. She said 'They will crimp me!' [Sheva was afraid of being crimped by foreign intelligence.] At first I laughed at those fears of hers, then I tried to make her change her mind, but it didn't work. In the last years of her life she had severe sclerosis and we had to keep her under permanent watch of a medical nurse in a center of the Black Sea shipyard. Our distant relative helped aunt Sheva to get there and after she died in 1991 this relative got her apartment. Sheva was buried in the Tairovskoye [town international] cemetery.

My mother's youngest sister Ghenia was born in Odessa in 1908. Se was a typist in an office. She was single. I remember that she was a whining and lamenting type. When I became a doctor I diagnosed that she had a Graves' disease that provoked such behavior. [It is an autoimmune disorder resulting from a combination of genetic and environmental factors, the most common symptoms of it are nervousness and anxiety.] Ghenia perished with grandmother Matlia in Odessa in 1941.

My mother Chaya Molodetskaya was born in the town of Sosnitsa of Chernigov province in 1889. The family moved to Odessa when my mother was still a baby. The family had lower than average income. My mother finished an elementary Jewish school for girls where she also had sewing

training. My mother used to sew at home.

Growing up

My parents got married on 7 June 1919. They had a civil ceremony. There was no religious wedding. My parents settled down in a basement in the end of Bazarnaya Street. In early 1920, when she was pregnant, my mother moved to my father's sister Basia in Petroverovka to eat better food. This was at the time of the Civil War and once ataman of a gang that came to Petroverovka ordered to take all Jews to the square to kill them. My mother was in this crowd. She told me that they survived by chance: that very moment someone shouted to ataman that Kotovskiy [12] was in 5 versts from the village and they all rode away hurriedly. I was born in Odessa on 10 August 1921. I remember myself in a small damp room on the ground floor of a brick house in 10, Bolshaya Arnautskaya Street. For me the greatest pleasure was to get into my father's bed when he brought coal from the basement in the morning and watch him stoking the stove. We had a cooperative of tenants and housing manager. Tenants arranged meeting to discuss any maintenance issues in the yard. They brought down chairs, a table and someone put a bulb out of their window. We got along well with our neighbors. There was no anti-Semitism before the war. Only someone Kovalenko who lived in the basement and provided woodcutting services to tenants spoke negatively about Jews in the yard. When in 1925 a three-bedroom apartment on the 2nd floor in our house got vacant a meeting of tenants decided to give it to us. There was a tiled stove in a big room, an old folding oak dining table, a sofa and a cupboard that my parents ordered from a cabinetmaker. It was very beautiful with stained glass folds and copper shields at the bottom. There were two beds with string mattresses in another room, a small desk, a sideboard and a wardrobe. Uncle Isaac and his family resided in the third room. There was an old box with copper belts around it in the hallway. My mother kept old clothes in it. In summer she aired them on the balcony. There were ostrich feathers, my mother's old embroidery pieces and an unfinished quilt rug. There were embroidered napkins on the furniture in our apartment. In 1928 our house was overhauled and the floors painted to imitate parquet.

My mother was a housewife. She was raising me. She never let me play with other boys in the street. She told me that they would teach me bad things. I was sitting on the balcony suffering terribly. My mother took me for walks always holding me by my hand. During such walks I learned to read on store signs. It was the second half of NEP [13], and there were many colorful signs on private stores. My aunts Sheva and Mary didn't have children and were spoiling me a lot. They often made me clothes. They lived with grandmother Matlia and were our neighbors. My mother and father spoke Russian at home, but when they decided that there was something I shouldn't know they switched to Yiddish. I knew some words in Yiddish. My father worked as an accountant in Tserabkoop on the corner of Pushkinskaya and Deribassovskaya Streets. He audited stores and shops. Once I heard him saying to somebody 'Just go away, I want to sleep quietly'. And then the door closed. It was a guilty director of a store asking my father to come to his help. My father didn't have many clothes, but he kept them clean. At work he wore black over sleeves. I remember that for three years in a row he wore a khaki shirt, boots and trousers of thick fabric. It turned out that it was prison wardens' uniform and he managed to get one somehow. My father was a melancholic person. He had acting talents. When we had guests occasionally he used to read Sholem Alechem [14] to them in Russian and Yiddish. We visited my father's colleague Spivak in Pochtovaya Street. Those were quiet evenings: they talked and told jokes. There was no singing, dancing or drinking.

My parents were not religious. I was a convinced atheists and turned my head away when I passed by a church. We celebrated Soviet holidays at home, but never Jewish holidays. We lived a modest life, but we always had good food. My mother believed food was of the utmost importance. She could make do with whatever she had to wear, but she liked to eat heartily and loved to make food for us. My mother valued chicken. Our standard lunch consisted of chicken broth with rice and a piece of chicken with garnish. She also cooked gefilte fish and dishes from matzah. However, she rarely cooked with matzah since we could only get it at the synagogue and at this period it had to be done in secret. When I got ill my mother made me cutlets from big bullheads. I liked them so much that I used to tell mother ‘I wish I got ill!’ She cooked on a primus stove. I was responsible for the stove: I had to refill kerosene, watch needle stocks and clean the head. I took the stove to the open staircase behind the backdoor, took the head and stretching my hands off the handrails cleaned the soot. Sometimes I had to go stand in line for kerosene at 5 o’clock in the morning. I used to stand 3-4 hours before I could buy 2 liters of kerosene.

At the age of 8 I went to Russian school #48. Before going to the 6th grade I wore stockings on the waistband, knee-long pants and a fustian jacket. When in 1930 aunt Minna came from America she gave me a woolen pullover. This was a tiptop. In summer I wore canvas shoes on rubber soles, hopsack trousers and a white shirt and I believed I was dressed luxuriously. I didn’t always have boots in winter: there were coupons for winter boots. At home I wore slippers that my mother made to save. In 1931, when uncle Isaac moved out his room was given to Lyova Dikkerman, a Jewish shoemaker, and his wife Ida. We got along well with them. Lyova’s wife and my mother used to chat when cooking in the common kitchen. Ida addressed my mother with ‘Madam Molodetskaya’. Lyova earned additionally working at home and his clients went to see him across the kitchen where we had our meals. All my childhood passed to the banging of a shoe hammer.

In 1932 my father went to work in a closed store of NKVD. Life became easier for us. During the period of famine my father received food packages and flour. My mother baked rolls, but she didn’t give any to take to school since there were hungry children around. Our school director was a well-known pedagog in our town. His name was Grigori Markovich Radzinski. He became director of school #100 in 1935 and he hired the best teachers and took the best pupils from his previous school. There were pedagogical experiments conducted in our school. One of them was a method of teamwork. Grades were divided into groups consisting of one pupils with strong knowledge and few weaker ones. Teachers usually asked head pupils in a group to come to the blackboard to answer and then they put same marks to the rest of his team as he got. The other pupils in my group did nothing. They ran around or played chess. There was no anti-Semitism in our school. Most of my classmates were Jews. Misha Beiderman, our best pupil, impressed us with the width of his literary interests. For example, he read Omar Hayam or Shakespeare. [Omar Hayam's approximate years of life 1048–1122. In 1070 he moved to Samarkand in Uzbekistan which is one of the oldest cities of Central Asia. He was an outstanding mathematician and astronomer, well known as a result of Edward Fitzgerald's popular translation in 1859 of nearly 600 short four line poems the Rubaiyat.] He was head boy of our class and Komsomol 15 secretary. My friend Igor Chop told me that Misha tried hard to convince him to repudiate from his father who was imprisoned in 1937 [during Great Terror] 16, for his former service in the tsarist army as an officer. In our class no parents of schoolchildren were arrested, but in the parallel class there were about five children whose parents had been arrested. Our director Mr. Radzinski was a decent person. He supported these children. Igor Chop recently told me that director called him to his office to say

words of support. Once on a Soviet holidays we were in the theater where a representative of Komsomol district committee greeted us with general phrases I said aloud: ‘Again propaganda for the Soviet power!’ Our history teacher was sitting beside me. She heard what I said and on the following day she called my mother to school and said ‘You are playing with fire when you allow yourself to talk dangerously in the presence of your child’. At nights people in our house didn’t sleep listening to booted steps in the yard: to which entrance they headed again? My father returned home late and sat reading a newspaper until very late. He was very concerned about the situation, but he kept silent about it. In 1937 few of my mother’s acquaintances suffered, but she didn’t discuss it with me, although I was already 16 years old. My mother was a law-obedient person. She strictly followed whatever orders issued by higher authorities.

When I was a senior pupil I got fond of classical music. My friend Lyusik Rozenblit had an acquaintance who was administrator in the Opera Theater. We went to Rigoletto [opera by Giuseppe Verdi, famous Italian composer of the 19th century], with Mr. Savchenko, a famous baritone. In the area of Rigoletto, a jester, in Act 2, the actor was falling from the 2nd step of a staircase and we only went to see Act 2. My friends and I also went to see the Blue Blouse performances where they sang ‘We are trade union members and we wear blue blouses, we shall give all bourgeois our answer’. [Ed. note: Blue Blouse was the worker’s amateur propaganda group.] I finished school in 1939. I had my father’s jacket altered to wear it to my prom. I had all excellent marks in my certificate and was admitted to the Medical College without exams. We never heard about any limitations for Jewish appellants to colleges. I didn’t dream about medicine, but I joined my friends Boris Reznik and Grisha Golderberg (both Jews) were going to enter the Medical College and I decided to join them. I enjoyed studying there and the more I learned the more I got attracted to this profession. We had highly qualified lecturers. I earned money to buy the first suit in my life when I was the first-year student: I gave private classes to a pupil. I bought a cut of cheviot and to have the suit made in a garment shop I had to go stand in line at 5 o’clock in the morning.

When we were first-year students an order was issued canceling all privileges for students. We became subject to service in the army. Since I had inguinal hernia and a medical commission in the military registry office made a conclusion: fit for military service with limitations, reserve of the 2nd turn. My best friend Boris Reznik was recruited to the army in 1940. When the war began Boris was a political officer in the army. He took part in the Kursk Battle 17 and returned from the war in the rank of guard captain. After the war he finished Odessa Medical College with honors and worked in the district hospital in Novaya Odessa village of Niklaev region. In 1956 he moved to Odessa and worked as chief doctor of the urology department in Odessa regional hospital. Now he is a pensioner.

During the war

In winter 1941 I fell ill with angina. I didn’t stay in bed and it resulted in rheumatic heart disease. I was bedridden for 4 months. We had a premonition of a war while newspapers wrote that we were friends with Germany and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 18 was executed: this was confusing. Shortly before the war my father and I bought a nice 10-valve receiver. I was very proud of it. We listened to radio transmissions and music. On 22 June 1941 we didn’t turn on our receiver. Our neighbor Ida had her radio on. I heard her saying: ‘Madam Molodetskaya, Molotov 19 will speak on the radio’. I got scared; I realized there was going to be a war. I remember that Ida burst into tears:

she had two children.

On 22 July at 9 o'clock in the morning the first bombing of Odessa happened. On the following day my father and I were walking along Zhukovskogo Street past shell-holes and smoldering ruined houses. We were heading to the military office in school #117. At the beginning of the war my father was to turn 50 a month later, but he received a subpoena and went to the registry office. Even younger men ignored such calls. When we were on the way back he said 'Tell mother there was nothing I could do to avoid it', but I knew that he didn't even try. At first he was sent to Mariupol and then to Moscow to excavate trenches and long-lasting fortifications.

We began to hide in bomb-shelters and fight with fire-bombs. We wore gauntlets and grabbed a fire-bomb throwing it into a barrel with water. We even used to joke 'if a fire-bomb drops into your yard throw it into your neighbor's window'. We had our belongings packed in two bags at home in case of fire. Uncle Isaac's wife had a relative working in Odessa defense committee. He gave us ship boarding tickets for four. Isaac offered two to my mother and me. We got on a truck and covered Isaac's children six-year-old Rieva and 13-year-old Solomon with tarpolin. In Tamozhennaya Street some military stopped our truck, but they didn't inspect it. A first lieutenant stood on a footboard and asked 'Four people? Go ahead'. At that time a terrible bombing began. I was sitting encompassing my head with my arms, staring on the ground and thinking 'Well, it's O'K'. We had to climb a ladder to get on our ship called Kamenets-Podolsk where they also checked documents. Uncle Isaac made an arrangement with a loader who lifted the children on board in a bag with luggage. We, four adults boarded with our tickets.

Four days later we arrived in Mariupol. We were accommodated in the foyer of the theater in Mariupol. We sat and slept on our bags for four days. After the first bombing of Mariupol we ran to the railway station. There was a train with open platforms heading to Kuban. We climbed those platforms. When we were going past the railway station in Rostov-on-the-Don some people were shouting to us 'Hey, zhydy, are you scarpering to the rear?' It was distressing. In Shkurinskaya railway station we received free borsch. We arrived in Stalingrad on 1 September 1941. It was quiet there. Then we went to Sverdlovsk where we heard by chance that there were many people from Odessa in Alma-Ata [4,125 km from Odessa]. My mother and I headed to Alma-Ata and uncle Isaac and his family moved to Tashkent [3,200 from Odessa]. In Alma-Ata I went to the Kazakh Medical College. My co-student Grisha Goldenberg added missing credit marks into my record book and I was enlisted on the third course. This enabled me to avoid recruitment to the army. We lived in a hostel. We were supposed to complete an academic year's course in half a year, but somehow it did not seem possible. We got up to have military training at 6 o'clock in the morning and we also learned to ride a motorcycle. There was one motorcycle and took a nap while waiting for our turn to ride. The only meal available was pasta with no fat. This food didn't satisfy the hunger. There were 6 tenants in our room. One was on duty and the others slept to save the energy. Every morning the one on duty went to the diner with a tin kettle. He filled it with pasta. We stuffed our stomachs, but we felt starved by lunchtime. There were lectures after lunch. I also went to work as medical nurse boy in the first surgery polyclinic. I was on duty every third night. After working overnight I returned to the hostel and fell on my bed with my clothes on. I was hungry and exhausted.

My mother got an accommodation in the apartment of Chadicha Ilgamovna, a single Kazakh woman. She worked in a public library and brought me books that I chose from a catalogue. I

remember that I read scripts of American films. My mother received an assignment to work in a brick plant, but she fell ill and quit. When she recovered she went to wash dishes in the canteen of the confectionery factory. Once when I was on duty in the hospital they brought in a pretty Odessite girl. She had her hand burnt with caramel. Later I came to replace her bandages since she was from Odessa and during the war even a stranger from Odessa seemed to be close. Later, when I came to see my mother at the factory she brought me a bowl full of hot chocolate, about 500 grams. Of course, I couldn't eat it all at once. My mother gave me some brine from a barrel with pickles and after having it I could continue eating chocolate. At least I didn't feel hungry until the following morning.

All of a sudden, on my birthday on 10 August 1942 we received a letter from my father. He wrote that he was demobilized due to his age and was heading to the south looking for us. He settled down in Krasnodar where he worked as chief accountant in the all-union scientific research institute of tobacco and makhorka. Every day he went to the railway station hoping to see somebody he knew who could tell him about us and he finally managed. On that same day I heard on the radio that our troops left Krasnodar. In early 1944 when Krasnodar was liberated my mother wrote to this address and the woman that leased a room to my father replied. She said that when Germans came they ordered all Jews to come to a gathering point and threatened with execution to those who were hiding them. My father went there to not let down his hostess. She gave a jar of honey and warm socks. From the gathering point people were transported in mobile gas chambers. This was how my father perished in 1942.

I had all excellent marks and when I was a 4th-year student I made my first surgery: appendicitis. There were 220 students from Odessa in our college. We upheld our reputation in studies and in sports. Te basketball team from Odessa became won championship in Kazakhstan: and this was regardless of lack o food. In early 1943, when I was a fifth-year student I got another job: I lectured on sanitary standards in the railroad technical school and received a rail man coupon for 800 grams of bread. Even when I was exhausted after a night's work in hospital I shaved before going to lectures: I was their teacher. On 3 July 1943 I received my diploma with honors and became a certified therapist. I also was awarded a book Recipe Manual and a ticket to ballet performance Giselle with Galina Ulanova [Galina Sergeyevna Ulanova – a prominent Soviet ballerina]. On the following day we received subpoenas to the military office.

We arrived at the front in Nezhin on 6 November 1943. Our hospital assigned to the First Byelorussian Front was in a ruined building. We placed bricks into window frames and installed cleaned X-Ray tape to make a window leaf. Surgeons were released from doing repair works, but to engage us they sent us to a neighboring village to get some cattle. The villagers let their dogs free seeing us and we had to return with nothing.

We were following advancing troops to the West. Our hospital was near the railway station in Sarny, Rovno region. The station was continuously bombed and we moved to Tutovichi station in 8 km from Sarny. We lived in earth huts that our patients helped us to dig. In one earth hut women were accommodated and men in another. There were two couples living in a civil marriage: they had two small separate earth huts made for them. We built a barrack with a diner and a storeroom and also we made a club in a tent spread on two posts. There were swarms of mosquitoes exhausting us. They hummed exactly like German Heinkel aircraft. We set green spruce cones on fire in tins from American tinned meat: it generated acrid thick smoke. We installed it in the

dwelling and when the smoke filled it one of us keeping his breath ran inside and grabbed the tin to take it outside. We hanged a gauze curtain on the door. This helped us to get rid of mosquitoes.

My department of slightly wounded patients was in a barrack. There were plank beds along the walls. In the corner we made a curtain for a bandage room. I had 200 patients almost all of them were wounded in their limbs. I developed a conveyer method that was approved at the military medical conference in Brest in 1944. The procedure was as follows: two patients came in and lay on a couch. A medical assistant removed dressing from one patient and a medical nurse started treatment of the wound and then they switched to another patient and the first one was ready for me. Working with his wound I dictated to senior nurse making records. Then the assistant applied bandage on the first patient and I switched to another one.

Attendants in the hospital washed bandages, but they took the rest of laundry to special laundry units. Many patients had fleas. I managed to escape this by changing my underwear every day. This was rough cheap cotton underwear and when you moved your shoulders it felt like a bast whisp brush. We often washed in the sanitary washroom. There were huge 500 L tubs connected to a boiler. Patients and hospital employees had meals in the dining room. We had good food. There was always a nice piece of meat in borsch or soup. This was our base food. We received uniforms in the storeroom. We chose a bigger size overcoat to have it altered by a tailor when we lodged in a town. Some women even managed to have puffed sleeves made in their coats. There was a shoemaker among our patients. He could make nice boots from a pair of hospital slippers and ground sheet. They were light and nice, although they were khaki color that was against the rules. We applied black shoe polish and managed to polish them to glitter and they looked as the best boxcalf boots.

I was elected Komsomol leader of the hospital. My attendance of all party meetings was compulsory. There was a staff propagandist in our hospital. He read us newspapers in our political training classes in the morning. He also watched that girls behaved decently. He checked them peeping into their windows in the evening. There was one Smersh [special secret military unit for elimination of spies, under the slogan ‘Death to spies’] officer per 2-3 hospitals. Once I had to address one. A train with the wounded arrived at our hospital. Every patient had records of his wounds. Some wounded had a package. This meant that they had had surgeries. I noticed that one patient with a wound in his right hand behaved differently turning away from everybody. I approached him and opened his package. There was a paper with ‘verdict of the military field court’ in it. It turned out to be a self-inflicted wound. I was bound to find a Smersh officer to notify him. He thanked me, took this patient on a truck and they left.

When the ‘Bagration’ operation [Belarus operation of the Soviet army in the summer of 1944. The invasion force consisted of 1,700,000 troops supported by 6,000 planes, nearly 3,000 tanks, and 24,000 artillery pieces. This attack cost the Germans more men and material than the defeat at Stalingrad.] began, we had many patients arriving to the hospital. I was on duty when once they took a patient with a misfire ‘frog’-mine that stuck between his chest and shoulder blade. I called chief surgeon, but he got scared and refused to help me. I cursed to myself and found a field engineer. His last name was Smirnov. He was slightly wounded. A medical nurse prepared two sets of surgical tools on two tables. I ordered the others to stay at least 50 m away from surgery tent. I asked this field engineer where I could make a cut and only when he said it was all right I moved my scalpel. When we removed the mine Smirnov placed it in a box with sand and soon I heard an

explosion. For this surgery I was awarded a Red Star Order. Later I corresponded with that Tajik villager for five years.

In 1945 we were in Garvolin base in a small village in Poland. The troops advanced 200-300 km to the west and we were behind them. Finally a bus arrived to pick us up. On the way we were singing Russian popular songs ‘Na solnechnoi polianochke’ [On the sunny glade], ‘V lesu prifrontovom’ [In the front-line forest]. We were in high spirits considering that we were moving to the west. It was dark already and we were driving past a soldier with his rifle. He looked at us strangely and then began to shoot in the air. We stopped and he ran toward us ‘Where are you driving, damn you!’ It turned out to be the last combat security post and there were German troops ahead. We almost drove to German disposition singing songs.

At the end of the war our hospital was in Straussburg town 28 km from Berlin. On 2 May 1945 chief of hospital put us on a truck and we went sightseeing to Berlin. We signed on the Reichstag. We were told to not come inside houses. There were many mined things in them. On 9 May we got to know that Germans signed capitulation and by two o’clock in the morning we began to receive patients again. It turned out they saluted from different weapons without looking where they were shooting and wounded many people.

After the war

In 1945 I came to Odessa to visit my mother who returned from evacuation. There was a family living in our apartment. I came in my uniform and an order on my chest, put my gun on the table and said ‘Either you give one room to my mother and I am leaving or I shall stay until you move out of here!’ They accepted the first option and later they moved out. Our furniture was stolen. I saw our sofa in our janitor’s apartment and brought it back home. Our neighbors told us how grandmother and Ghenia perished. They were reluctant to tell us the story since they couldn’t do anything to help them. My neighbor Dasha who did people’s laundry kept a suitcase with valuables that my friend Boris Reznik’s father gave her before evacuation.

After the war I served in Bobruysk in Byelarus. Every month I sent my mother 10 kilograms of flour and half of my salary. She didn’t even have a food card. In 1947 I met my future wife Lidia Vdovina in the hospital. We got married two years later. Lidia is Russian. She was born to a wealthy family in Gornoaltaysk in 1922. Lidia didn’t tell me about her father since he had left the family and the town. Her mother Maria Yakovlevna Tabakaeva was born in 1886. She was a plain woman and could hardly read or write. She died in 1964. Lidia had two sisters and a brother. Her brother Vasili perished at the front in 1943. Her older sister Anna was a teacher of elementary school. She died in 1974. All I know about Lidia’s sister Tatiana is that she died in 2001. Before the war Lidia finished an obstetrician school in Gornoaltaysk. During the war she was an assistant doctor and joined the Party.

When I got married I only had one suit. I gave my mother all money I earned. My wife also supported her mother and she wore a coat with shoulder straps removed from it. Even in 1950 I still didn’t have a coat and was upset to have to wear my military overcoat to a New Year party in the house of officers. When we came in I took my hand off her elbow so that my fellow comrades didn’t notice my miserable material condition. In the regiment where I served as chief doctor pilots of an air force logistics base pilots made contributions to a fund 1000 rubles each and then drew lots and whoever got lucky bought a Moskwich or Pobeda car [Soviet cars]. Within a year all pilots

got new cars.

The period of Doctors' Plot 20 didn't have any impact on me. I knew that accusations against leading doctors in the Soviet medical science about purposeful poisoning of the population were obviously made up. However, I didn't dare to express my critical opinion about it to anyone. Nobody changed their attitude to me at my work. Besides, chief of our hospital was a Jewish man. Two days before Stalin died I read a report on his health condition in a newspaper and thought that it indicated that he had a stroke, his Chain-Stocks breathing and other symptoms, this indicated that he was dying. When Stalin died my wife who was a communist said like everybody else around 'How will we go on living?' I didn't share her opinion since I believed that Stalin was a dictator and had been thinking so for a while. My only concern was that Beriya 21, this butcher of a man, could win the struggle for power.

On 9 January 1952 my son Grisha was born. We lived in Chernyshevskoye village, in Nesterov district, Kaliningrad region. I worked as a military doctor in a military unit. We very poor living conditions. I had to fetch water in buckets onto the third floor. We cooked on a kerogas stove. On 31 January 1953 my daughter Zoya was born in Chernyshevskoye. In 1956 we moved to Paplaka in Latvia. It was a district town. There were an artillery and tank regiments near this town. They had a medical unit, a bakery and a bathtub. I served as chief of medical unit in the rank of a major. We stayed there for over a year.

In 1957 I was in Odessa on vacation. My mother told me that her friend's cousin Zlatko returned from 'there', meaning from imprisonment, a former secretary of a district Party committee in Odessa who had spent 20 years in prison. I went to see him and he told me about it, but not everything about it. He still had fear rooted deep in him. I think glory to Khrushchev 22 that he was brave enough to speak the truth about Stalin on the 20th Congress 23. Khrushchev had many imperfections. He was a voluntary and made a mistake with his corn ideas: I saw corn fields in Latvia when I served there: the plants were maximum half meter high. [During Khrushchev's rule corn was widely grown in the USSR without consideration of climatic specifics of regions]. In the early 1960s I read 'One day of Ivan Denisovich' by Solzhenitsyn 24. It made a big impression on me.

At the age of 6 my son fell ill with asthma and I requested a transfer to Belgorod-Dnestrovsk town in Odessa military regiment in 1958. They reduced me in the rank, though. In 1962 I was appointed senior doctor of the regiment. The Party organizer of our regiment exhausted me with his talks that I should join the Party. I saw how shaky a position of Jews in the army was. The policy was to put no obstacles to resignations and to not promote. Deputy political officer Frolov used to tell me that I had to be the best being Jewish or they would pick on me if they got a chance. I understood that if I didn't demonstrate my loyalty to the party they would force me to quit, but I had two children to think about. Chief of headquarters and commander of the regiment gave me their recommendations and three months later I was elected a Party organizer of the headquarters. I had 48 party members under my supervision.

In Belgorod-Dnestrovsk our children studied well at school and had many friends. They didn't face any anti-Semitism. In their birth certificates in the line item 'birth origin' Russian was written. Grisha was a quiet boy. He liked reading books and playing chess with me. He was good at technical things. Zoya was very vivid. She went to a ballet school.

In 1969 I demobilized from the army and moved to Odessa with my family. We came to live with my mother. Two years later I received an apartment and offered my mother to live with us, but she said she wanted to live alone. She moved in with us in 1975 in a five-bedroom apartment on the 9th floor of a building in Kotovskiy district. My mother died of gullet cancer four years later in 1979. We buried her in the Tairovskoye cemetery. I worked as a surgeon urologist in town hospital #8, and then I changed work several times, but I always had this same position. I had four articles published and did scientific work.

In 1969 Grisha finished school. He tried to enter the Law Faculty in Odessa University twice. They required some work experience for admission to this Faculty and preference was given to young militiamen. After working in a social insurance department for a year Grisha managed to enter an evening department. I insisted that he went to work. Grisha worked as polisher/joiner in Prodmash plant. He worked night and shifts sometimes, but this helped him to become mature. Upon graduation from University Grisha worked as a lawyer at the Centrolit plant. He was in conflict with his boss (who was a Jew). He mistreated Grisha and didn't give him an opportunity for promotions and provoked minor conflicts. Grisha quit his job and went to work as a legal consultant in the construction department of Odessa military regiment.

Zoya studied in the 9th and 10th grades in school #100 that I had finished. She finished school in 1970 and for 3 years in a row she tried to enter the Faculty of Foreign languages where there was always high competition. Having lost her hope to study there, that same year she married Albert Shenkerman who was born in 1941. He was a foreman at the medical equipment plant. In 1974 their son Misha was born. They divorced. My daughter worked at the library of the Medical College. She was manager of a professor's department. Her salary was small and Zoya had to earn additionally. She decided to learn a profession of medical nurse. She entered a medical school in Odessa. After finishing it she studied in an acupuncture academy in Moscow where she received a diploma. She made massages very well and earned her living doing this work. Wealthy clients paid her $5-6 for one massage at home. In 1994 her son Misha moved to Israel at the invitation of coach of the Israel handball team. Now he is a professional sportsman and plays in the team of Israel. In 1996 Zoya followed her son. They live in Nes Ziyon near Tel Aviv. She passed exams and got a massage license. Now she is learning cosmetic massage and children's massage. I have positive attitudes toward Israel. The people of Israel built a prosperous country in a deserted area. I've visited in 1999 my daughter and I know what I am saying. I stayed there for two months.

In the 1980s many of my acquaintances emigrated. Their departures were like funerals. We knew that there was hardly any chance to see each other again. When my great nephew Marik Shechterman, aunt Surah's grandson, was leaving I didn't even go to the railway station to say good bye to him. I believed that we would be all photographed and later have problems. So much scared we were then. My wife and I never considered departure since we couldn't imagine life anywhere, but in Odessa.

In the 1970-80s I gradually began to develop a critical attitude toward life and rules in our country. I was interested in politics and subscribed to at least 10 newspapers and magazines reading and analyzing and situation. I understood that this wasn't a socialist system, but a dictatorship of the ruling Party clique. In 1977 my wife and I visited aunt Minna in America and I saw how much worse our life was. Since we worked for state structures or material situation was stable. We didn't have any additional earnings, but we managed on what we had. Lidia worked as senior medical nurse in

the physical therapy department. She was a very good massager and a high skilled trainer of therapeutic exercises. Every year my wife and I spent vacations hitchhiking. In 1980-83 we went on horse riding trips to the Altay mountains. We traveled to Bashkiria, Georgia, Subcarpathia, Yerevan and Petersburg. We bought tours to Czechoslovakia, Germany and Poland.

Grisha got married in 1985. His wife Irina Osipova, Russian, was born to the family of a forester with many children in the Baikal region in 1962. She finished a pedagogical school and she works as a teacher of elementary school. In 1986 their son Zhenia was born. Now he is finishing a Richelieu lyceum and is fond of computers. Unfortunately, he doesn't read books. Grisha and his family live in a two-bedroom apartment in 56, Yevreyskaya street. Grisha is very ill. He had bronchial asthma, he is an invalid of 1st grade and he receives a pension.

Gorbachev's 25 perestroika 26, in my opinion was a high-minded effort with wrong tools. Gorbachev was too weak and started reforms without appropriate persistency or giving a thought to peculiarities of the people. Perestroika was a progressive process, but it had to be implemented with different methods and more resolutely.

In 1992 my wife Lidia died of cancer. In 1996 management of polyclinic #15 of Suvorov's district where I was working made me to retire, although I felt like continuing to work. I am not religious and do not observe any Jewish traditions or holidays. I think that when former Soviet citizens demonstratively observe Jewish or Christian traditions, they are not sincere. However, I respect charity efforts of Jewish organizations. In 1998 one of my acquaintances who worked as a volunteer in Gmilus Hesed advised me to ask for their assistance. I did and they offered me aid at home. A social worker helps me to do my apartment. This assistance is very important to me considering my health condition. Besides, I receive food packages once per month. They deliver it to my home. There is a cultural center in the Gmilus Hesed where I read lectures about soviet poetry.

Glossary

1 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.

2 Collectivization in the USSR

In the late 1920s - early 1930s private farms were liquidated and collective farms established by force on a mass scale in the USSR. Many peasants were arrested during this process. As a result of the collectivization, the number of farmers and the amount of agricultural production was greatly reduced and famine struck in the Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus, the Volga and other regions in 1932-33.

3 Kolkhoz

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools, and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

4 Famine in Ukraine

In 1920 a deliberate famine was introduced in the Ukraine causing the death of millions of people. It was arranged in order to suppress those protesting peasants who did not want to join the collective farms. There was another dreadful deliberate famine in 1930-1934 in the Ukraine. The authorities took away the last food products from the peasants. People were dying in the streets, whole villages became deserted. The authorities arranged this specifically to suppress the rebellious peasants who did not want to accept Soviet power and join collective farms.

5 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.

6 NKVD

People’s Committee of Internal Affairs; it took over from the GPU, the state security agency, in 1934.

7 Jewish collective farms

Such farms were established in the Ukraine in the 1930s during the period of collectivization.

8 Civil War (1918-1920)

The Civil War between the Reds (the Bolsheviks) and the Whites (the anti-Bolsheviks), which broke out in early 1918, ravaged Russia until 1920. The Whites represented all shades of anti-communist groups – Russian army units from World War I, led by anti-Bolshevik officers, by anti-Bolshevik volunteers and some Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. Several of their leaders favored setting up a military dictatorship, but few were outspoken tsarists. Atrocities were committed throughout the Civil War by both sides. The Civil War ended with Bolshevik military victory, thanks to the lack of cooperation among the various White commanders and to the reorganization of the Red forces after Trotsky became commissar for war. It was won, however, only at the price of immense sacrifice; by 1920 Russia was ruined and devastated. In 1920 industrial production was reduced to 14% and agriculture to 50% as compared to 1913.

9 Gangs

During the Russian Civil War there were all kinds of gangs in the Ukraine. Their members came

from all the classes of former Russia, but most of them were peasants. Their leaders used political slogans to dress their criminal acts. These gangs were anti-Soviet and anti-Semitic. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

10 Lenin (1870-1924)

Pseudonym of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the Russian Communist leader. A profound student of Marxism, and a revolutionary in the 1890s. He became the leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Party, whom he led to power in the coup d'état of 25th October 1917. Lenin became head of the Soviet state and retained this post until his death.

11 Birobidzhan

Formed in 1928 to give Soviet Jews a home territory and to increase settlement along the vulnerable borders of the Soviet Far East, the area was raised to the status of an autonomous region in 1934. Influenced by an effective propaganda campaign, and starvation in the east, 41,000 Soviet Jews relocated to the area between the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, by 1938 28,000 of them had fled the regions harsh conditions, There were Jewish schools and synagogues up until the 1940s, when there was a resurgence of religious repression after World War II. The Soviet government wanted the forced deportation of all Jews to Birobidzhan to be completed by the middle of the 1950s. But in 1953 Stalin died and the deportation was cancelled. Despite some remaining Yiddish influences - including a Yiddish newspaper - Jewish cultural activity in the region has declined enormously since Stalin's anti-cosmopolitanism campaigns and since the liberalization of Jewish emigration in the 1970s. Jews now make up less than 2% of the region's population.

12 Kotovsky, Grigory Ivanovich (1881-1925)

Russian hero of the Civil War. He worked as an assistant to a manor manager. He was arrested several times over the years and was even sentenced to death, but this was later changed to penal servitude for life. In 1917 he joined the leftist Socialist Revolutionaries. He carried out a heroic campaign from the river Dnestr to Zhitomir in 1918 and took part in the defense of Petrograd in 1919.

13 NEP

The so-called New Economic Policy of the Soviet authorities was launched by Lenin in 1921. It meant that private business was allowed on a small scale in order to save the country ruined by the Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. They allowed priority development of private capital and entrepreneurship. The NEP was gradually abandoned in the 1920s with the introduction of the planned economy.

14 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916)

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life.

He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the Dairyman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

15 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.

16 Great Terror (1934-1938)

During the Great Terror, or Great Purges, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labor camps or killed in prison. The major targets of the Great Terror were communists. Over half of the people who were arrested were members of the party at the time of their arrest. The armed forces, the Communist Party, and the government in general were purged of all allegedly dissident persons; the victims were generally sentenced to death or to long terms of hard labor. Much of the purge was carried out in secret, and only a few cases were tried in public ‘show trials’. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the Party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary. Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union until his death in March 1953.

17 The Kursk battle

The greatest tank battle in history of WWII occurred at Kursk. It began on July 5th, 1943 and it ended ignominiously eight days later. The Soviet army in its counteroffensive crushed 30 German divisions and liberated Oryol, Belgorod and Kharkov. During the Kursk battle, the biggest tank fight – involving up to 1200 tanks and mobile cannon units on both sides – took place in Prokhorovka on 12 July 1943, and it ended with defeat of the German tank unit.

18 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, which became known under the name of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Engaged in a border war with Japan in the Far East and fearing the German advance in the west, the Soviet government began secret negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. In August 1939 it suddenly announced the conclusion of a Soviet-German agreement of friendship and non-aggression. The Pact contained a secret clause

providing for the partition of Poland and for Soviet and German spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

19 Molotov, V

P. (1890-1986): Statesman and member of the Communist Party leadership. From 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs. On June 22, 1941 he announced the German attack on the USSR on the radio. He and Eden also worked out the percentages agreement after the war, about Soviet and western spheres of influence in the new Europe.

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 Beriya, L

P. (1899-1953): Communist politician, one of the main organizers of the mass arrests and political persecution between the 1930s and the early 1950s. Minister of Internal Affairs, 1938-1953. In 1953 he was expelled from the Communist Party and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of the USSR.

22 Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971)

Soviet communist leader. After Stalin's death in 1953, he became first secretary of the Central Committee, in effect the head of the Communist Party of the USSR. In 1956, during the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev took an unprecedented step and denounced Stalin and his methods. He was deposed as premier and party head in October 1964. In 1966 he was dropped from the Party's Central Committee.

23 Twentieth Party Congress

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 Khrushchev publicly debunked the cult of Stalin and lifted the veil of secrecy from what had happened in the USSR during Stalin's leadership.

24 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.

25 Gorbachev, Mikhail (1931)

Soviet political leader. Gorbachev joined the Communist Party in 1952 and gradually moved up in the party hierarchy. In 1970 he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, where he remained until 1990. In 1980 he joined the politburo, and in 1985 he was appointed general secretary of the party. In 1986 he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history. The Congress of People's Deputies, founded in 1989, voted to end the Communist Party's control over the government and elected Gorbachev executive president. Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and granted the Baltic states independence. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, he resigned as president. Since 1992, Gorbachev has headed international organizations.

26 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.