Miron Manilov

Miron Manilov is a young-looking man of short height. His hair is getting thin, but in spite of that, he looks young for his age, maybe because he has retained an excellent military posture.

Miron doesn't say much. He is rather terse and sticks to the point. He lives with his wife in a two-room apartment of a bearing-wall house in one of the most remote Moscow districts, Novo-Gireyevo.
Miron's right hand is crippled but despite the mutilation, he does almost all the chores.

His wife has been bedridden for about five years as a result of having been unsuccessfully operated on her spine.
Thus, Miron has to take up most of the household chores and take care of the house as well. Miron is taking care of his wife tenderly.
He is still working in a policlinic as a deputy chief physician in the issues of civil defense.
Miron is involved in social work at the Moscow Council of the Jewish War Veterans 1 of the Great Patriotic War 2.

My family background

My father's family lived in a small Jewish town called Yagotin, located in Kiev oblast, Ukraine [about 90 km away from Kiev]. My grandfather's name was Meishe-Ber Manilov and my grandmother's name was Mariam. I don't know my grandmother's maiden name. I assume both of them were born in the 1840s. My grandparents were born in Yagotin, and their children were also born there.

Back in that time, almost the entire population of Yagotin consisted of Jews. Jews and Ukrainians were very friendly towards each other. There were no conflicts on the nationality ground. There were several two-storied houses of the local rich men in the center of the town. Well-off people were mostly Jews. As far as I remember from my childhood, the rest of the houses were one-

storied. Market square was the town center. There were also small private stores and shop, owned by Jews. Things were mostly sold at the market by Ukrainians, who lived on the outskirts of town. They provided the city with food products.

Jews lived mostly in the town center, where the land was more expensive. Garden plots were small in the town, so there was no room to make a kitchen garden or an orchard. That is why Jews were craftsmen: tailors, cobblers, hair-dressers, harness-makers, tinsmiths, etc. There were orchards, fields and gardens on the outskirts. The Ukrainian peasants took into consideration that their customers were mostly Jews, so they sold only live poultry, because none of the Jewish ladies would buy butchered poultry, which wasn't cut by the shochet, who worked right by the market. The ladies stopped by the shochet on their way from the market so that he could butcher the bird in accordance with all the rules. On Thursday, a lot of fresh fish was brought as they knew that on Friday gefilte fish would be cooked for Sabbath.

There was an Orthodox church and a synagogue in Yagotin. The synagogue was a long one-storied building. Women prayed in a separate room. There was a dormer window so that they could hear the prayers. There was a cheder in the yard of the synagogue. Of course, I didn't see it, because after the revolution [see Russian Revolution of 1917] 3, the Soviet regime started the struggle against religion 4, and it was closed down. The cheder was turned into a four-year Jewish school.

Jews in Yagotin tried to live close to each other. The street where my grandfather lived in Yagotin was over-populated by Jews, and the majority of them were Grandfather's relatives - cousins and second cousins and even more distant relatives. The street was about 500 meters long. In general, Jews clustered together and kept in touch with their relatives. I suppose Ukrainian and Jewish families were getting along. It might be possible, but there were no cases like that in my family. They respected each other, had good neighboring relations, but there was no friendship.

Before the revolution and during almost the entire period of the Civil War 5 there were Jewish pogroms 6 in Yagotin. Gangs 7 came and Denikin 8 troops as well. Local Ukrainians never took part in pogroms. During the pogroms, there were several cases where the Jews were murdered, but there was no massacre. Young Jewish lads organized defense squads [see Jewish self-defense movement] 9. Of course, they didn't have proper weapons. Clubs, spades and pitchforks were used instead. The squads stood in defense and the pogrom-makers fled.

My grandfather, Meishe-Ber, was a stubby man. He was always dressed in black and wore a black hat on his head. He had a kippah under his hat. He took off the kippah only before going to bed. He had a long beard and plaits, and was strict and tacit. My grandmother, Mariam, was a short, buxom woman and her character was totally opposite to that of my grandfather's. She was always smiling and amiable. Ukrainians called her Mariasya. Grandmother was a smart woman with a sharp tongue. She always wore dark blouses and pleated skirts. Jewish women didn't wear wigs in Yagotin. How could you find wigs in the village? They just covered their heads with kerchiefs.

My grandmother was a housewife like most Jewish women back in that time and my grandfather was involved in commerce. He had a small grocery store near the market, where cereal, salt, sugar and tea etc. were sold. Some of the children helped my grandfather with the store. Apart from trade, my grandfather also was an assistant to the rabbi in the synagogue. He assisted the rabbi in all financial issues i.e. collection and allocation of donations. My grandfather was well known for his honesty and was respected by everybody in the town. He had to work a lot as he had a large family

of ten children. Of course, it was hard to provide for food and clothes for the whole caboodle. The family didn't beg. They had a modest living - not luxurious, but rather comfortable. They had all necessary things, and could get by without excess.

My grandfather had a large house constructed from oak logs covered with clay as most of the houses in Yagotin. All the children lived in that house before getting married and some of them brought their families in the parental house before they could provide for themselves. There was a very small plot of land by the house which was barely enough for a shed or a small wooden outhouse. There was neither a kitchen garden nor an orchard as there was no room for that.

I didn't know all the siblings of my father; some of them died in their childhood. I can only name those whom I knew personally or was told about. The eldest son of my paternal grandparents was Jacob whose Jewish name was Yankl. Then Pinhus was born. The next one was Aizik. I didn't meet those two brothers of my father, I just heard of them. Both of them immigrated to Argentina in 1905 and didn't keep in touch afterwards. The Soviet regime disapproved of those who had relatives abroad, and it was dangerous to correspond with them during those times. [It was dangerous to keep in touch with relatives abroad] 10 When I was a grown-up, I never mentioned that I had relatives abroad in any form, verbal or written. I was aware that it could complicate my life. It was the time to conceal things from everybody. Even my wife didn't know about that for a long time. Aizik was followed by another son, Sunya. Then two of my father's sisters were born - Freida and Hanka. My father, Shulim, was born in 1877. He was the last but one. Mendel was the youngest in the family.

My grandparents were religious. They marked Sabbath and religious holidays at home, and observed the kashrut. My father and his brothers went to the synagogue with grandfather when they were young. At the age of 13, each of them went through his bar mitzvah. After that, they were considered to be grown-up men. I don't know what education my father's sisters got. I know that Father and his brothers were educated in cheder. They didn't have any other education. All of them started work at an early age. They had to help out the family.

The elder brother, Jacob, was a trade intermediary. Sunya got married and left for the USA with his wife to seek fortune. It happened shortly after the revolution of 1917. His eldest son Jacob was born in New York in 1921. Sunya and his family stayed in America for a few years, but couldn't adjust to that way of life. So, they came back to Yagotin. Sunya worked as a sales assistant in a grocery store at the market. He died at a young age, before World War II, in the late 1930s. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Yagotin close to his parents. I don't know whether he was buried in accordance with the Jewish rites.

Both of my father's sisters got married. The elder, Freida, was married to a Polish Jew called Haim Gaft. He was in the Polish army during World War I and stayed in Yagotin after the war was over. The matchmakers told him about Freida and they got married. Haim was a harness-maker. He had a workshop at the market, where he made gear for the horses: saddles, bridles and collars. One room was used as a workshop and the other room was used as a store, where he sold his goods. Freida and Haim had three children - two sons, Abram and Konstantin, and a daughter, whose name I don't remember.

My father's second sister, Hanka, was a very beautiful and intelligent woman, but she wasn't happy with her marriage. She was married twice and after getting divorced for the second time, she

decided not to get married again. I don't remember her first husband's name. Esingolts was the name of the second husband. She had three children - two sons, Sunya and Milya, and a daughter, Fanya. My father's sisters were housewives after getting married. They took care of the children and the household. They lived separately from the parents.

My father was an apprentice at a young age. He had been an apprentice of the tinsmith and then started working independently. He first began in the workshop of his master, and then he started his own business. He repaired locks, made buckets, tubs, drain pipes, mugs and other tin ware. When my grandfather realized that my father was a good laborer, he assisted him in getting a workshop at the market, not far from Haim's.

My father's younger brother, Mendel, was also a craftsman - a soap-boiler. His soap-making shop was in the yard of my grandfather's house. There was a small shed where Mendel was working. Soap was made from the fat of dead animals and there was a stench during the soap-making process. We had to stand that as we had no choice. The readymade soap was sold at the market. Mendel was married. Fanya was his wife's name. They had three children. Actually, all my father's siblings had three children.

My father met my mother in Priluki, a small town in close vicinity to Yagotin. I don't know on what occasion my father was invited to Priluki. All I know is that it was the place where he met my mother. Shortly after meeting my mother, my father proposed to her. They got married in 1920. The wedding took place in Yagotin. Of course, it was a traditional Jewish wedding. My grandfather, Meishe-Ber, would have never allowed it to be otherwise. The newly-weds remained in Yagotin.

Growing up

I hardly know anything about my mother's family. My maternal grandfather, Meyer Reznik, died in 1920. My grandmother also passed away before I was born. I don't know whether she died before or after my grandfather. My mother, Fruma, was the youngest in the family. She was born in 1884. She had two elder brothers, Aizik and Motle, and a sister, Risya. Both of my mother's brothers participated in the Civil War. Motle survived the war and came back home. My mother's sister got married and left with her husband. I don't know where they went. She didn't keep in touch, so there is nothing I can say about her. I don't know why, but Mother never told me about her family, her childhood and adolescence.

My parents moved into my grandfather Meishe-Ber's house. My father worked as a tinsmith and my mother was a housewife. I was born in 1921. I was given the Jewish name Meyer-Aizik, after my mother's father and perished brother. This name is written in the certificate issued by a rabbi. My parents put a Russian name [see common name] 11, Miron, in my certificate of birth. In 1923, my sister Sarah was born and in 1927, my sister Raisa, whose Jewish name was Rohl, followed.

We had a room in my grandfather's house and there were also the families of my fathers' sister, Hanka, and younger brother, Mendel. By the way, Hanka's eldest son, Milya, was the apprentice of my father and worked with him in his workshop. My other cousins, who lived separately, came to see my grandmother quite often. She loved a great number of her grandchildren and was happy to see them in her house. The kitchen was big and spacious. A Russian stove 12 with the bench was the most conspicuous thing in the kitchen. When it was cold, the children liked to stay on the

stove-bench to get warm. We used to chat and play different games together. Sometimes my grandmother, after having done her work, told us fairy-tales and stories from the Torah, which sounded like fairy-tales to us.

We skated and sleighed on frozen ponds in winter. I remember how I liked to get back home to get warm. My grandmother, who was doing some chores by the stove, took off her kerchief and I put my cold fingers in her warm hair to get warm. In summertime, we went to the pond for bathing and swimming. We didn't have our own fruit trees and so we made 'raids' in the orchards of Ukrainians and stole apples and pears. The adults were rather indulgent to us. We weren't punished, just got scared off at times and that was it.

Only Yiddish was spoken at home. We spoke Russian and Ukrainian to our non- Jewish neighbors. Yiddish is my mother tongue. I understand Yiddish very well, but now I'm not fluent in this language.

All Jewish traditions were kept at home. My grandfather was strictly making sure of that. Of course, the kashrut was observed the way it was supposed to be. Nobody worked on Sabbath. It applied only to those who lived in grandfather's house. I don't know whether the rest of the family, who lived separately with their families, carried out these traditions. We had to observe them. On Sabbath evening, all of us got together in the drawing room. My grandmother lit the candles and prayed. Then we had a festive dinner. She baked bread for the whole week and the Sabbath halakhah. The next morning, my grandfather went to the synagogue and spent the whole day there reading religious books. My father and Mendel went to the synagogue with him.

Pesach was always celebrated very ceremoniously. My grandmother, her daughters, and daughters-in-law, cleaned and whitewashed the house thoroughly, and baked matzah for the whole family. On the eve of the holiday, bread was taken from the house, even the breadcrumbs. Only after that, it was allowed to take paschal dishes from the loft. During the whole paschal period there was not a single slice of bread, we ate only matzah. Grandmother cooked a number of Jewish dishes - gefilte fish, chicken broth, fried chicken, tsimes. She also baked strudels and sponge cakes.

In the evening, the whole family gathered at the table. All of Grandpa's children came with their families. It was a rule. My grandfather, clad in white clothes, was sitting at the head of the table and leaning on the pillows. He carried out seder in accordance with the laws. There was a large goblet with wine in the middle of the table. It was meant for the prophet Eliah, who in accordance with the legend came into every Jewish house to bless the dwellers. One of the grandchildren asked my grandfather the traditional questions [the mah nishtanah]. Seder lasted for a long time. Even if younger grandchildren started falling asleep, grandfather never reduced it. On Yom Kippur, everybody fasted in the house except for the children. Children who hadn't reached the age of 13 were exempted. My parents also fasted when we lived with my grandfather.

On Sukkot, my grandfather built a sukkah - a hut made of wood strips and tree branches. Reed and pine branches were put on the top. The walls of the hut were decorated with plants and flowers. A big table was put inside the sukkah. The family had meals there in spite of the weather, even when it was raining. My grandfather prayed in the sukkah. I also remember Chanukkah. My grandmother put a chanukkiyah on the table and each day added another candle in it. On that holiday, all relatives gave children money, Chanukkah gelt. I remember my cousin Abram, Freida's son, who

was older than me, also offered me to swap Chanukkah gelt. I gave him one coin and he would give me five in return. Abram took a silver coin from me which was equivalent to 20 kopecks and gave me five coins which were worth five kopeks. I didn't know how to count at that time and was happy with the exchange.

My father worked very hard to provide for such a large family, but the times were very hard and it was difficult for him to earn money. I began helping him at an early age. He taught me a couple of things and I was eager to fulfill his assignments. We had a very modest living. My father's earnings were barely enough to provide us with simple food and moderate clothing. But we didn't starve. We had enough food, but there were no dainty things for us. A lollipop was the most desired gift.

We lived for a few years in my grandfather's house. When I turned six, my father began making more money and we had a chance to live separately. Of course, he didn't have money to buy or construct his own house. We rented a small one-room house from a Ukrainian family. We lived there until 1934. When we lived separately from Grandfather, we didn't observe Jewish traditions. Anyway, our family went to grandfather's house on Jewish holidays as it was a family tradition to get together on holidays.

After we moved from my grandfather's house we lived among Ukrainians. I didn't feel any anti-Semitism. We respected each other and had friendly relations. I played with Ukrainian boys and never heard the word 'Jude' [German for 'Jew'] referred to me. I think that there was no anti-Semitism before the war.

When I turned seven, I went to the four-year Jewish school. The school was in the former cheder premises at the end of the street, where my grandfather lived. It was an ordinary compulsory school, but all subjects there were taught in Yiddish. I knew how to read and write in Yiddish. In the first grade, I became a young Octobrist 13, and in the fourth grade I became a pioneer [see All-Union pioneer organization] 14. Since childhood, we were plied with love to Stalin. It seemed to me, when my answers were good in school, Stalin was smiling at me tenderly. He was an idol, a God to me. My love and belief in him was unconditional. We were devoted followers of Leninism believing in socialism. We assumed that soon it would be strengthened for ever.

In 1930, my grandmother died. She was buried in accordance with the Jewish laws. I remember her lying on the straw, covered in a white shroud. The candles were lit around her. My grandmother was buried in that shroud without a coffin in a Jewish cemetery in Yagotin. My grandfather recited the Kaddish by her grave. I wasn't present at the funeral of my grandfather. He died in 1936. My parents went to his funeral. He was buried next to Grandmother, also in accordance with the laws.

In 1932, there was a famine in Ukraine 15, which lasted for a year. It was a very hard period of time. We didn't have a garden. The products at the market were outrageously expensive. My sisters and I went to the forest to gather nettle and sorrel. My mother made soup from it. Of course, it wasn't enough to fill our stomachs, but the warm soup could momentously help get over the feeling of constant hunger. Sometimes, peasants paid my father for his work with potatoes. We didn't peel the potatoes, just boiled them and ate them with the skins. There were cadavers of people, who had died from hunger, in the street. From time to time, they were put on a cart and carried away. Then new ones appeared. It was extremely hard, but we survived it.

In 1933, my father's elder sister, Freida, moved to Kharkov [440 km east of Kiev] with her husband and children. At that time, the Kharkov tractor plant sought personnel and my uncle Haim, Freida's husband, was employed by the plant. They were given two rooms in a communal apartment 16. When Haim had worked for a while, he wrote to my father and said that there would be a job for him as well. Father decided that it was time to move to Kharkov, as it was getting harder and harder to make a living in Yagotin. First, he left by himself. We were supposed to join him after he got settled.

After finishing four classes of the Jewish school, I had to continue my studies. There was a Ukrainian seven-year school in Yagotin. I was accepted in the fifth grade of that school. There were a couple of more students of the Jewish school. We were accepted very well. We knew each other very well, as we used to play together in the yard. We weren't singled out from the non-Jewish students. I completed seven classes in Yagotin and got a certificate. Shortly after finishing school, we left Yagotin for Kharkov.

Freida and her family lived in a densely populated communal apartment. My father lived with them. We also moved in her apartment after we got there. Ten people turned out to live in two rooms. It was poky. There was no room to put a bed. I slept in my uncle Haim's bed, my sisters slept in Freida's daughter's. My father and Uncle Haim worked in the workshop of the tractor plant. Apart from wages, workers were also given food rations, which made it easier for us. My mother didn't work. My father was the bread-winner of the family. We could hardly get by, but as compared to the famine times, we thought our living to be great. I went to the eighth grade of the Russian school, where my sisters were studying. I finished nine grades in that school. In the ninth grade, I became a Komsomol 17 member and I took pride in it. Being one of the best, I was among the first students of our grade who was accepted in the Komsomol.

When we moved to Kharkov, neither our family nor Freida's observed Jewish traditions. Both the families celebrated Soviet holidays - 1st May and 7th November [October Revolution Day] 18. My mother and my aunt tried to make a treat for the whole family and give small presents to the children on those days. It was mandatory for the workers of the Kharkov tractor plant to attend holiday demonstrations, and my father and his brother Haim always took their children with them.

After finishing the ninth grade, I was sent to special artillery school #14. I preferred humanities at school, but I was also good at mathematics. I didn't mind having a military career, because at that time militaries were respected, not the way it is now. And, artillery was the most respectable as it was considered to be intellectual as good knowledge in mathematics was required to make calculations. I didn't have any options. There were only two military schools in Kharkov, and both of them were artillery. It was a big help for my family as well, as it was a boarding school - we were fed and dressed. My parents didn't have to spend money for my maintenance, only my sisters were to be provided for. It was a real big help for them.

We studied all liberal arts in the military school, which was included in the syllabus of any ordinary school. We had a more profound study of mathematics as compared to the common schools. We also had specialized military subjects such as tactics of the military actions, ballistics etc. A lot of attention was paid to physical training. Apart from compulsory PT, we were also supposed to go to the gymnasium. Everybody had the right to choose what sport they wanted to do, but heavy athletics and long distance running were included in the curriculum. In summertime, we were taken

to the military camps. We were dressed in military uniform - tunic, trousers and boots. We often noticed envious looks of the civilian boys of our age, and we felt flattered.

During my studies at school, the period of arrests [during the Great Terror] 19 started, there were trials of enemies of the people 20. We were constantly finding out that a certain betrayer or spy was divulged. We weren't perplexed that all enemies of the people were famous military commanders, great party and economy leaders, people who strenuously were working for the Soviet regime and protecting it. Now, I'm asking myself, why I have never questioned this back in that time and why there were so many of the so-called enemies of the people. I didn't have any thoughts like that. We took things in good faith. If people were imprisoned or shot, it meant that they were guilty. The Party and Stalin couldn't make any mistakes; it was an undisputable and unquestionable belief.

We knew that Hitler came to power in Germany. We also were aware of the atrocity of the fascists, but we were sure that there would be nothing of the kind in our land. We were raised and formed under constant pressure of propaganda. We knew that our army was strong and invincible. We believed that the enemy would never be able to step in our land, and if somebody dared to attack us, it would be a blitzkrieg on the enemy's territory. We were constantly reading about that in books, hearing broadcasts on the radio and watching movies. There were no doubts.

After finishing artillery school, I was sent to continue my education in the Moscow Red Banner Artillery School. So, I am considered to be a Muscovite since 1939. I have lived in Moscow for 56 years. I didn't have to take entrance exams because I had a certificate from the military specialized school and the assignment. Those who had served a regular term in the army didn't have to take entrance exams either. Only those who had finished secondary school were supposed to take the exams. A couple of more graduates from our school left with me and all of them were accepted. Our school was considered prestigious, and the teachers had a good attitude toward us.

We lived in the barracks. Each training platoon lived in a separate barrack. In the morning we had breakfast and then went to the classes. We only had special military subjects. After classes we had lunch, then a recess. After that we had to do physical exercises and homework. Sport was very important in school. The officer was supposed to be versatile. I was very short, as a matter of fact, the shortest among the students and was given the nickname Molecule. I had been teased before we had the first class in heavy athletics. I easily did all major exercises with a dumbbell of two poods [pood is an ancient Russian measure of weight; one pood equals 16 kg], and the main bully, a tall guy, couldn't do those exercises. From then on, that nickname, Molecule, was forgotten, except for the classes in the gymnasiums, when we had running exercises.

In the winter time we skied, in summer we had cross-country running. The commander of our military school, Colonel Yuri Bazhenov, who lived from 1905 to 1975, consequently artillery marshal and the commander of the Anti- aircraft Artillery Academy in Kharkov, always took part in the running with the students. We were confined to the barracks and weren't allowed to go in the city except on the weekend, we got leave for the whole day and were permitted to go to the city, attend museums and theaters. We eagerly got ready to go out. We cleaned our boots in a special way. I remember how we added sugar to the shoe polish for the boots to shine even better.

I was really indulged in school. I got a scholarship as I was an excellent student, and owing to that I was able to help my family. The situation with products was better in Moscow than in Kharkov.

Every month I sent my parents parcels with food. At that time, my sister Sarah was studying at a finance college and Raisa at school. My father was the only one who worked, so my assistance was significant.

During the war

In 1939, Hitler's troops invaded Poland [Invasion of Poland] 21. That war ended very quickly. Our army defeated the Germans very swiftly, which gave us even more confidence that there was no better force than our army. The USSR and Germany divided Polish territory, thus we had a direct border with Germany. There was a feeling of coming calamity after the Molotov- Ribbentrop Pact 22 was signed. Germany was now our ally and friend. We took it as our victory in foreign politics. After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in Lvov, there was a joint parade of the Soviet and German troops.

In late November 1939, the Soviet Army unleashed war with Finland [see Soviet-Finnish War] 23. That war shook our confidence a little bit. Such a small country as Finland successfully resisted and defended itself for a long time; meanwhile our army was having great losses. It wasn't only due to the battles; there were a lot of people with frostbites of arms and legs in our hospitals which resulted in amputations of frost-bitten arms and legs. That war demonstrated our helplessness and bad organization in the army. The Finnish war also pointed out the flaws in provision. After the war, new winter military uniform was introduced: fore-and-aft caps were replaced with fur caps with ear flaps. Then felt boots and sheepskins were introduced in the army.

In May 1941, we completed school. I was an excellent student during my studies, and I had the right to choose when getting my mandatory job assignment 24. I chose the Northern Caucasus military circuit. I went to Krasnodar [1,300 km east of Moscow], where the headquarters of the circuit was located. From there I was allocated to howitzer artillery regiment #302 in Hamlet Ust-Labinsk, not far from Krasnodar. I was the commander of the fire platoon of the so-called corps artillery. There were the largest weapons - 152mm cannons and howitzers. I stayed there for a month, and on 22nd June 1941, all of us found out about the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War 25 . Germany attacked us despite the non-aggression agreement. There were fierce battles, and on 28th June, our regiment was sent in the lines to the district of Vyazma, out of Smolensk. The regiment took a couple of echelons. Cannons were loaded on the open platforms. They were thoroughly fastened and disguised.

People were in locomotives, in the cars for cattle transportation. We weren't bombed on our way. Our trip to Vyazma was considerably calm. The first time we were bombed was when we arrived at Vyazma railroad station. It wasn't a random bombing. German spies precisely indicated the location of our echelons. I remember how there were some flashes by the echelons. There were the signals of the German spies. The bombing started right after those signals. It was the first bombing I had to survive. It was dreadful. The noise was unbearable - the blasts and burning. We left the cars to hide away from the bombing somehow. Things calmed down closer to the morning. It turned out that only one out of several echelons remained unscathed. It was the first time when I saw the wounded and killed. It was scary.

Our assignment was to take the firing line, where our infantry was positioned. I don't remember the name of that hamlet. We went there and took position. Our artillery squadron consisted of three

squads with twelve weapons. I was promoted in rank. I was assigned the commander of reconnaissance of the squadron. I was given the first assignment which was to bring shells for our cannons and howitzers. Each shell weighed around 100 kilograms. Ammunition was in the artillery storage in the rear regiment. I was given twelve trucks; each of them had the loading capacity of three tons. Three officers, a couple of soldiers and I went to fulfill the task. We were bombed and fired on our way. German fighter planes were almost landing over our heads. We thought we wouldn't make it, but thanks to God we managed to reach the storage.

We were lucky that most of our way was via the forest, where it was easier to hide from the planes. There were no commanders on spot. It took us time to find the ammunition commander of the district. He gave an order to load our trucks with shells. We lost a lot of time and were supposed to go back before the artillery preparation of our troops, carried out before attack. The attack was scheduled and wasn't supposed to be late. We were shown a short cut, so we could save some time. We had driven about a third of our way, and saw the sign, 'mined.' We had no time for bypassing. The officers and I had a council and decided that we should take a risk and drive through the minefield.

There were no combat engineers among us. We got off the trucks and moved forward. I was in the center, two officers were on the side of the ruts, and the last one was behind. Our trucks were driven slowly, following us. We had to walk 400 meters like that. If one mine blasted, the rest of us would be blown up as well. I was 19, and the rest of the officers weren't much older than me. All twelve trucks successfully passed through. We managed to get the ammunition there at the assigned time. In a couple of hours, all trucks were unloaded and each squad got the shells. We were ready to start artillery preparation.

Before starting the attack, tanks were supposed to go first, then artillery preparation had to start, and only after that the infantry was supposed to go. But there was a shortage in tanks at the beginning of the war, and the available tanks had weak armor. The Germans fired point-blank at the tanks, and the artillery had to take up the whole preparation before the attack of the infantry. Of course, we didn't manage to suppress the adversary with the artillery fire. Very often, the infantry was sent to face certain death.

There were times when I was frightened in the battles. No matter what they say about bravery, the instinct of self-preservation is always there. I didn't believe those front-line soldiers or professional soldiers who took part in war and said that they had no fear. I honestly say: I was scared. I wanted to survive. But my military duty was stronger than fear, than feeling of personal security. So we were aware that we were involved in those things we feared. I think this is the essence of human courage.

Our division was constantly transferred from one place to another in the district of Vyazma. There was not enough artillery in the lines at that time and we were sent to those places where attack was being prepared. Once, our squadron came to a new position, and we placed the weapons at a distance of 20-30 meters from each other. We had hardly dug in when an artillery burst started. One of the shells appeared by cannon wheels. We were lucky that it didn't blast. Then later on, we found out that there was a squad of Katyushas at our place. [Editor's note: The 82mm BM-8 and 132mm BM-13 Katyusha rocket launchers were built and fielded by the Soviet Union in World War II. The launcher got this unofficial, but immediately recognized in the Red Army, name from the

title of a Russian wartime song, Katyusha.] It was noticed by the Germans. Katyushas were our rocket artillery, which had nomadic military actions. They came to make a burst, and then left at once. We were taking care of that weapon, as it was unique. The Germans were chasing it. Then we found out that the Germans knew where the Katyusha squad was located, but they weren't aware that they had left. When we started fire, the German artillery was firing at us as well.

Battles in the vicinity of Vyazma lasted for a long time and extended to Elnya, Smolensk, which was a large section of the western front. Soon the squadron commander sent me to the infantry to organize the adjustment of the fire of our twelve artillery weapons. One orderly was subordinated to me. We came to the position of our infantry - the trenches of the forward edge. We adjusted the fire over the phone. There was a telephone operator close to me. I looked through the binoculars and determined the distance of the blasts and judging by the deviation I gave orders on how to adjust the aiming sight of the weapon in terms of meters and degree of arc.

The Germans dislocated their tanks about one kilometer away from our position in the forest, before the squad lines, where I was enlisted as an adjuster of artillery fire. Then those fifteen tanks started attacking. I had telephone communication with the squadron commander. I gave him the position data of the tanks and our squadron opened defense fire. We were shooting at the firing line, and gridded the thrust line so as not to let the German tanks approach us. As a result of those actions performed by the squadron, ten tanks had been punctured, and the other five returned to their previous position. First, I was included in the list of awardees and later on I was awarded with the Order of the Red Star 26 for that operation.

In late fall 1941, I was sent to adjust fire again. As a result of that battle I was wounded. I had a contusion and a severe arm injury. When we had defeated the attack of the German tanks, the Germans started fire from mortar guns. I was in front of the trench and a shell fragment pierced my arm, and was caught in the bone. I lost consciousness. I was lucky that my orderly was close to me, who bandaged my arm and helped me go back to my squadron. The contusion was severe. I could neither hear nor say anything for a while. I was sent to the medical battalion. They put on a bandage, but they didn't operate on my arm. I was told to go to the station together with the other wounded soldiers.

We were then sent to the rear hospital. It was a type of a sub-station. The severely wounded were in the premises of the railway station. There was no room for those who were able to walk. I went to the platform. It was really cold and a pitch dark night. The officer on duty came to the platform, and I asked him where I could go to get warm. He showed me the house where the nurses lived. They helped the wounded at the railway station. I knocked at the door and asked for permission to go in. The ladies, having heard the voice of a man, started screaming and told me to leave. I explained that I was wounded and I was only looking for a place where I could stay before the train came and I was let in. The ladies wanted me to lie down on one of the beds, but I refused, saying that I was straight from the trenches and had a filthy field uniform. They put a mattress on the floor. I used my overcoat as a cover and fell asleep. Through my dream I could hear the girls say, 'How young that lieutenant is!'

The girls woke me up when the echelon arrived at the station. We got on the train and went to the hospital in Tula [250 km east of Moscow]. I stayed there for about a month. The bone of my arm was comminuted, nerves and tendons were lacerated. Bone splinters were constantly coming out

from the wound, which was secreting and causing a repulsive stench. I was prepared for the operation, but the Germans were approaching Moscow and we were sent to the deep rear, Orenburg [1,200 km south-east of Moscow], called Chkalov back in that time. Local inhabitants met us with honor at Orenburg railway station. We were taken to the hospital, and I was operated on. My wound was cleaned. They also tried to remove as many splinters as possible, and my arm began to heal.

I was corresponding with my parents and found out from one of their letters that the Kharkov tractor plant had been evacuated to Stalingrad [1,000 km away from Moscow] to the territory of the Stalingrad tractor plant. I sent my officer's monetary certificate to my parents. After I was discharged from the hospital I was given one month's leave. I went to visit my parents in Stalingrad. They lived in Beketovka, 20 kilometers from Stalingrad. The doctor examined me in Stalingrad and said that I wasn't fit for the line of duty. I stayed with my parents for a while.

When the Germans started approaching Stalingrad, my father was told that the Kharkov tractor plant would be evacuated to Ural. My father suggested that I should leave with them, but I couldn't go. My arm was almost healed, though due to the lacerated nerves and tendons it was not behaving very well. I went to the Stalingrad military enlistment office and asked to be sent to defend Stalingrad. First they wanted to refuse me saying that I was disabled, but finally they gave in. I was allocated to the separate artillery regiment #155. I was assigned a squad commander.

It was the summer of 1942 - the beginning of the Stalingrad battle 27. Our artillery regiment was on the left Volga bank, opposite Stalingrad. The fiercest battles were on the right bank, where the Germans were dislocated. The infantry was mostly in battle. We supported its divisions with artillery fire. The Volga was 1.5 kilometers wide in the vicinity of Stalingrad. Both the Germans and we had long-range guns, meant for 15-20 kilometers. Of course, our position was not safe either, but as compared to those who were in the city and infantry soldiers, it was much easier for us. The artillery division had much less casualties. Those soldiers who were fighting for Stalingrad perished in great numbers.

In the city, the soldiers were fighting for every single house, stairwell and floor. They didn't spare their lives and fought heroically. We had the most casualties due to the bombings and shells of artillery weapons. The situation with the nutrition and ammunition was very hard. As I was in artillery reconnaissance, I was often sent to the right Volga bank to adjust fire of our weapons. Crossing was organized. There were small river boats, which were called pleasure boats in civilian times. There were also motor boats and rowing boats. Of course, the Germans found out about our crossing and fired at us. Some people managed to cross the river, others didn't ... I was lucky. I went reconnoitering for a couple of times, crossing the river and never got wounded.

There was a SMERSH 28 department in any military unit. First, I thought that their job was to catch Germans spies. Then I understood from my own experience, that their main task was the same as in the NKVD 29 during peaceful times. There were different talks between the officers and the soldiers: disapproval of the actions of the commandment, doubts regarding correctness of the party assignments. SMERSH was supposed to have their stooges everywhere so that they could find out who was displeased, and it was their major task. Then those people were sent to the Gulag 30 or to penalty squads. I don't think they really took the pain to verify the data provided by the stooges.

I was a literate officer, energetic, sociable and easy-going. I could go up to anybody and have a conversation. I was a good listener and I was listened to. I was respected in my regiment. Once I was called by the head of the SMERSH department of our regiment and was told that the Party and government asked me to assist in the struggle against the spies. I refused by saying that I had never been involved in anything of the kind. He objected to me and said that I was a patriot of my motherland and it was my duty. He saw that he couldn't talk me into it by using good means, so the SMERSH representative started putting pressure on me.

He said that my father was an exploiter as my nephew Milya was working for him in his workshop. He started talking brusquely thinking that I would get scared, saying that before entering military school I had concealed the fact that I was the son of an exploiter. The methods of SMERSH people were directed to intimidate. These were ruthless and fierce people. Anyway, I managed to insist on my refusal. The SMERSH representative was dissatisfied with my decision. I had been awaiting some kind of repression towards me, but luckily, I wasn't touched.

At the beginning of the war, the armament of our army was much to be deplored. Our infantry was armed with the rifles of the World War I sample. Only in 1942, guns appeared, and later on pistols. But still there was a demand for automatic weapons. Of course, such poor armament affected the course of military actions.

The artillery soldiers had much better living conditions than the infantry ones. We were usually two to three kilometers away from the front edge and had the chance to build and equip trench shelters. The artillery had a better food supply; we even got chocolate and cigarettes. At the beginning of the war, I didn't smoke and swapped cigarettes for chocolates; I started smoking later. We tried to take a bath as often as possible. It was easier in summertime. We had a bath in the tent or just in the forest. At that rate, we weren't lice-ridden, whereas the infantry was suffering from lice catastrophically.

At the beginning of the war, food wasn't supplied on a regular basis. When we were retreating, the field kitchen wasn't able to follow us all the time as they didn't know where we were located. There were times when the field kitchen came to the place where we had been a couple of hours before. In such cases we were given a reserve stock of canned meat, three lumps of sugar and rusks. Of course, it was a big help when the field kitchen didn't catch up with us. When it came, we always were saturated as there were extra helpings because of casualties. There was more vodka per person. We were given 100 grams of vodka before attack to be in high combat spirits. Everybody was drinking, even those who didn't use to drink during peaceful times. People were facing certain death and a little drink helped get over the fear a little bit.

There was no anti-Semitism among soldiers or officers in the lines. There were other more important criteria, namely reliability and credibility in predicament - whether your comrade would take the wounded one from the field, share the last sip of water or the last piece of rusk with you. Nationality didn't mean anything to us. The situation with the cigarettes was intense. We made rolls from the last pinch of tobacco and smoked it in turns, passing it to each other - be it Kazakh, Russian, Ukrainian or Jew.

Jews were as brave as the people of other nationalities, and everybody saw that. All that tittle-tattle regarding non-participation of Jews in the lines, just staying in Tashkent, while others were shedding blood, started after the war. [Editor's note: Tashkent is a city in Middle Asia; it was the

town where many people evacuated during the Great Patriotic War, including many Jewish families. Many people had the idea that the whole Jewish population was in evacuation rather than at the front and anti- Semites spoke about it in mocking tones] The Germans were trying to streamline anti-Semitism even among the soldiers in the lines. I remember, during the battles in the vicinity of Vyazma, the German planes didn't release bombs over our positions, but flyers in Russian saying, 'Take a stick and turn out Jude to Palestine,' but nobody reacted to that.

Though anti-Semitism existed in the official authorities, I found out about that only after the war. In 1943, all headquarters received a circular letter from the state political department [GPU] 31 of the army: to avoid promotion of Jews in middle and high ranks and award Jews as little as possible. I think that it was strictly observed by established posts. But in spite of that discrimination, Jews took the second place among the military awardees following Russians and that considering that there were 100 nations in the USSR. There are 150 Heroes of the Soviet Union 32 among the Jews, who totaled two million in the USSR before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War.

I stayed in Stalingrad until the end of November 1942. My wound opened and bled, the splinters were coming out. When it got cold, my arm got swollen and dark. As it turned out I was afflicted with gangrene. The surgeon of the medical battalion said that he couldn't comprehend how they had taken me in the lines with such an arm. According to him, I should have been in the rear a long time ago. In spite of my pleas to let me stay in the lines, the doctors came to the conclusion that my front-line career was over. I was told that it was necessary to amputate my arm immediately, if I wanted to live. I was sent to the hospital in the vicinity of Stalingrad. Fortunately, the surgeons of the hospital saved my arm. I was operated on for a couple of times. My suppurating comminuted bone was cleaned and the nerves were sutured. Of course, they didn't manage to restore all functions of my arm. Now my arm is crooked and slow-moving, but in spite of that, they performed a miracle - my arm was saved.

I had stayed in hospital for a long time even after the Stalingrad battle was over. In the hospital, I was given the following military awards for participation in the Stalingrad battle: Order of the Great Patriotic War 33, 1st Class and a Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad 34. I was discharged from the hospital in the summer of 1943. The medical examination board made a statement that I was incapacitated for serving in the lines, but I remained in the army. The commandant suggested that I should teach artillery in the reserve regiment. I was sent to the training squadron in Aktyubinskiy, Tatarstan [1,000 km south-east of Moscow], where soldiers were trained for battle actions.

I became a member of the Party in the reserve regiment. In early 1944, our entire reserve regiment was sent to Barnaul, Altai Mountains [3,000 km north-east of Moscow]. By that time there were a few combatant officers as we had severe casualties. There were a lot of political officers of the squads, battalions and regiments. They were considered to be our ideological leaders, and they hardly took part in any battles. Stalin issued an order to retrain most of the political officers for them to become line officers. Our regiment was involved in retraining former political officers. I was the commander of the squad.

The Stalingrad battle became a turning point in the course of the war. Frankly speaking, at the beginning of the war, when our troops were constantly retreating with severe casualties and getting besieged, we had doubts in our victory. Of course, nobody discussed it openly, because there were SMERSH stooges everywhere, and such a statement would have been revealed. But I

wasn't the only one who had thoughts like that, when we were leaving one populated area after another, our comrades were perishing, and the Germans were moving forward. Only after our victory in the Stalingrad battle we felt that we fought for the cause and the enemy would be defeated.

During the war, I loathed Germans and fascists. I didn't consider them to be people, just enemies. That feeling remained 'til the end of the war. Then I thought things over, and understood that not all German soldiers came to our land on their own accord: they just carried out the orders of Hitler and their commanders. It took time for me to come to understand that hundreds of thousands of our casualties were caused by mistakes of our commanders. When the war was unleashed our army was decapitated due to numerous repressions. The greatest and brightest commanders of our army were shot or exiled to the Gulag.

Captains, majors in the best case, were commanders of the regiments, and even the divisions having experience, required knowledge. Preposterous, groundless orders were the reason of so many deaths. There were cases where the battles were held for some populated areas of no strategic importance, where the whole armies were involved, having losses in equipment and casualties. Nobody could take a risk to tell the commander that his order was incorrect. The orders were that to capture at any cost human life. When Stalin understood that, he ordered the release of surviving commanders from the camps. That was the way Marshal Rokossovskiy 35, and other commanders came back in the lines. We began to win, as our commanders were professionals.

My parents and sisters came back to Kharkov in late 1944, shortly after the liberation of the city. The tractor plant was transferred to the city as well. My elder sister, Sarah, entered the law department of Kharkov University and my younger sister entered the Kharkov Medical Institute. My father kept working at the Kharkov tractor plant, and my mother remained a housewife. The family of father's sister Freida also returned to Kharkov.

After the war

My father's younger brother Mendel and his son were drafted into the lines at the beginning of the war. They didn't return. It isn't known what happened to them, they were reported missing. Mendel's widow Fanya went to Kiev with two of her daughters. The son of my father's deceased brother Sunya, Jacob Manilov, also was in the lines. Jacob went through the entire war. He was wounded, but the injury was not lethal, so he came back home. Both the sons of my father's sister Hanka, Sunya and Milya, came back from the lines alive. Their families lived in Saratov [800 km south-east of Moscow] after the war.

In early 1945, I was sent to study at the Leningrad Higher Artillery Officer School. I graduated from it on Victory Day 36, 9th May 1945. I remember that day very well. All Leningrad inhabitants went out. People who didn't know each other were congratulating and kissing each other. There was music and singing. But there was a bitter relish in our joy. We remembered those who didn't survive. There were fireworks in the evening. Everybody was celebrating.

In a couple of days, the German majors of some small cities of Leningrad region were publicly executed. There were six of them. There was a gallows on the square not far from the officers' school. The trucks came with one person sentenced to death, one Soviet officer and two soldiers.

When the truck was approaching the gallows, the noose was put over the neck of the sentenced and the car was slowly driving away until the executed had been suffocated. A lot of people came to watch the execution. It was hard for me to watch that. One thing is to see the killing of an enemy in battle, and quite another to see the execution of a helpless person who cannot defend himself. Though, I understood that their guilt was gross.

I graduated from the Higher Officer School with honors in the rank of captain and was sent to the town of Gorokhovets, Vladimir region [280 km north-west of Moscow]. I became a commander of the artillery squad in the camp. We worked for the squadron, went for trainings and carried out investigations, for the commander of the squadron.

I had served in Gorokhovets for three years, and decided to enter Moscow Academy of Engineering Troops. It was the year 1948, when anti-Semitism was displayed not only on a social, but on the governmental level as well. The process of rootless cosmopolitans [see campaign against 'cosmopolitans'] 37 commenced, and that was what the Jews were called. Though, at first scientists, actors, writers and musicians of different nationalities were involved in those processes, but it was clear, that it wasn't a matter of individuals, but an attitude towards the Jews. It was strange, because it was the USSR who was one of those who initiated the foundation of the state of Israel in May 1948. It was a joyful event for me. Finally, the Jews had their own state after so many years of wandering. Maybe the reason of the streamlined anti-Semitism was Stalin's anticipation that Israel would become a USSR satellite. But Israel had chosen another way, and had no ties to socialist countries.

I was given an assignment to the academy in the military circuit, and I went to Moscow. There were quite a few Jews among the entrants. I passed the exams successfully, but I wasn't accepted in the academy along with the other Jews who were trying to enter that institution. Of course, nobody told us explicitly that the reason was our nationality. They just said it evasively - we didn't meet the competition requirements. If it was only referred to me, I might have believed that - there might have been people who were better prepared for the exams than I - but I knew that out of all the Jews, who were taking entrance exams with me, only two were accepted.

I still had a couple of vacation days left and I decided to look for a bride. I was 27, and it was high time for me to get married; I didn't want to remain a bachelor any more. There were so many ladies around me, but I wanted to marry only a Jew. I thought it was my duty to preserve the Jewry. I was a member of the Party, but in that issue my international upbringing had no influence. I decided that I should attend the performance of the Jewish theater because I thought that I would meet a Jewish girl there. During the interval, I noticed a very beautiful girl in a décolleté velvet dress, surrounded by young people. There was an elderly woman with her. I assumed it was her mother. I didn't manage to go up to the girl, as the interval was over and the second act was to begin.

When the performance was over, I went up to the mother of the girl and suggested helping them getting the coats in the cloakroom. The lady thanked me for being so amiable and said that they lived far from Moscow and would get cold without the coats. I told them that a Jewish officer would never do such a mean thing. She liked my response, and allowed me to see them off to the outskirts of Moscow, where she lived with her daughter. The mother introduced her daughter to me. Her name was Evangelina Kilman. She was called Eva at home.

Marriage life and children

Eva was born in 1927 in a Ukrainian town called Uman [250 km south of Kiev]. Eva's father, Leib Kilman, was a farmer. He grew potatoes for sale. Her mother, Haya-Rivka Kilman, nee Vekselman, was a housewife. Eva was an only child. When she was one year old, the family moved to Odessa 38. Her father completed some courses and worked as an officer in some sort of institution. Eva went to music school and compulsory school. In late 1940, the family moved to Moscow, before the outbreak of war. Leib Kilman was drafted into the lines, and Eva was evacuated to Bashkiria with her mother. They lived in a hamlet. Eva went to school, and her mother worked in a kolkhoz 39. After classes, Eva helped her mother with the field work. Of course, they went through hard times, but they managed to survive. They went back to Moscow in 1943. Eva completed school and entered the Institute of Foreign Languages.

I was seeing Eva, when I was in Moscow. We were corresponding with each other after my departure. I fell in love and wanted to marry her. Eva didn't mind. The next year I went to Moscow to enter the academy once again, and again I flunked the exams. None of the Jews who submitted the documents with me was admitted. I was dating Eva during my stay in Moscow. I proposed to her and she agreed to marry me. In March 1949 we got married. We had an ordinary wedding in those times. We got registered in the state registration office and had a modest wedding party in the evening. We got together in a close family circle. My parents and sisters came to my wedding from Kharkov. When my leave was over, my wife and I left for Gorokhovets. The commandment gave us a room in the officers' barracks. There were a couple of more families of the officers. I kept on serving in the army.

My wife was involved in the amateur talent group of the regiment. Soon, I found out that I was to be transferred to the Far-Eastern peninsular Kamchatka [about 8,000 km east of Moscow], to artillery regiment #203, which was a part of the division, located not far from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski. My wife was pregnant and decided that it would be better for her and our child, if she returned to Moscow and stayed with her parents, and so I left by myself. I was given a room in the officers' barracks. It was in the log house on the coast of the ocean. The living conditions were primitive.

When my daughter, Diana, was born in 1950, I got a vacation and spent it in Moscow with my family. Then, I had to go back to Kamchatka. It was hard for me to stay there by myself. Most of the men there were single and as a result there was a lot of drinking, women, gambling, etc around me. I wrote to Eva about it. In 1952, she came to live with me with our two-year old daughter. She moved to the officers' barracks, i.e. a one-storied log house without conveniences. There was a common kitchen; toilet and water were outside.

Eva courageously got over all those inconveniences, but the climate of Kamchatka turned out to be too severe for her and our daughter. Kamchatka is indigenous, and by stepping on the ground you feel the nature of the earth - shakes and tremors of the soil. There wasn't enough oxygen in the air as well. Eva didn't feel very well and had heart trouble. The doctors advised her to go home. She didn't want to leave, but there was an earthquake in Kamchatka and all the family members of the militaries were evacuated. So, Eva and Diana left for Moscow.

Even in Kamchatka I had to go across with the officer of the special department [responsible for checking political reliability of the troopers. There were special departments in all civil offices, army units and in prisons], and again they tried to make a stooge out of me. The officer from the special department asked me to go in as if trying to verify certain data of my vita, and then started talking me into cooperation. He told me that there were a lot of officers in our military unit who weren't patriots and were crying out about mistakes of the Soviet regime, castigating the actions of the latter, and helping out our enemies accordingly. He said that I, being an honest communist, ought to inform them of such talks. I refused, and again nothing happened after that.

I stayed in Kamchatka. In January 1953, the Doctors' Plot 40 started. In spite of the fact that it only referred to the Jewish doctors, there was a sudden splash of anti-Semitism, which was reflected on all the Jews, not only doctors. People were afraid to see Jewish doctors considering that they were 'murderers in white robes,', as they were called by the press. Propaganda worked and people believed in that. Anti-Semitism was displayed so often and so conspicuously that certain civilians were scared to go outside thinking that they might be insulted or beaten. It was hard for me to believe that the doctors really wanted to poison Stalin. I was confounded.

The Soviet regime raised us in such a way that we had no right to question the verity of the Party actions. Like many other Soviet people I accepted the words of the Party as a religious person took the words of God, without discussing and doubting. The military Jews felt uncertainty. We were walking around downcast feeling ashamed that there were some Jews who could attempt assassinating Stalin. I noticed how my colleagues changed their attitude towards me. Before the Doctors' Plot, we had good and open relationships, and after the publication of the articles about the doctors being poisoners, they started looking at me doubtfully with a simper as if thinking, 'we know what you, Jews, are doing.' Of course, all of that was very unpleasant, but I couldn't change anything as I didn't know the truth.

I remember Stalin's death very well. We carried out artillery firing exercises. We were firing from the guns - by means of direct firing at the tanks, and during the trainings, carried out on 5th March 1953, we were informed that Stalin had died. Our eyes were streaming with tears. Our tears weren't false, we really were mourning over the death of such a great person. We considered him an idol. We thought we won World War II because of Stalin. When attacking we cried out, 'for Stalin!' At that time we were influenced by propaganda and believed in everything like real zealots. We didn't comprehend that it was mendacious. We were merely pawns in that war.

I was missing my wife and daughter after they had left. I felt so lonely, that I decided to leave Kamchatka and do away with my military career. I was a disabled veteran and asked to be examined in the hospital. I was given the second disability group and it was decided that I was incapacitated for the military services either in peaceful or in war times. In 1954, I got a chance to complete my military service and go back to Moscow. My wife and daughter met me at the railway station. A new life was awaiting me. I didn't have to carry out orders, but make decisions and independently have my own view.

I had to think about a job. I didn't have any civilian profession. Some of my acquaintances suggested that I should try teaching civil defense at school. At that time civil defense was included in the syllabus and the retired militaries were offered to teach that subject. Teachers were employed via the Municipal Department of Education. I went there, but at first didn't manage to

find the right building. I met a short elderly man on my way. He was dressed in pants with general trouser stripes and a civilian jacket. I asked him the way to the Municipal Department of Education. He asked me why I was looking for it, and I explained that I was demobilized from the army and sought a job in a school to teach civil defense as I didn't have any other specialty. He told me the way and who the contact person was. He also added that I should obligatorily mention that I was sent by General Mendelson.

When I got there and mentioned his name I was given the assignment immediately. The director of the school employed me. The only condition was to change my patronymic. My father's name was Shulim, and my full name sounded like Miron Shulimovich. The director said that it would be hard for the students to pronounce my name and asked me to change my patronymic to Sergeyevich. I didn't change my name officially, but my colleagues and students called me Miron Sergeyevich. My wife also found a job. She was a music teacher in a school, located not far from our house.

The Twentieth Party Congress 41 was where Khrushchev 42 exposed Stalin's cult of personality and his crimes. It was a shock to me. I had a good diction, and a baritone voice, so I was asked to read the text of Khrushchev's report at the general meeting of the teachers. I saw the text for the first time. I was given the brochure with the text a couple of minutes before the meeting for me to look through. The teachers were sitting at the desks, and I was reading the report from the pulpit. The teachers were sitting with bated breath like schoolchildren. Certain emotions were expressed on their faces. I could see what they felt.

I believed in everything told by Khrushchev and things were clear to me. At that time I came to understand what a dreadful role Stalin played in the history of our country, how many deaths he had on his conscience. Even the war could have been avoided if there had been another person in Stalin's place no matter what we used to think regarding the war which had been won due to him. Even if it couldn't have been admonished, it would have been won with much less casualties. So much sorrow was in our lives due to Stalin's anti-Semitism.

I was supposed to get higher education. I liked working at school, but I didn't want to teach civil defense for ever. I entered the evening history classes at the Teachers' Training Institute. It was a hard period for my family. After teaching, I attended classes at the institute. I spent my spare time preparing for the classes at school and doing homework. I hardly had any time to spend with my family. My wife had to take care of everything. There were lots of things to do - we had had two children by that time. Our son Vladimir was born in 1957.

I graduated from the institute with honors and managed to do my post- graduate in spite of the fact that anti-Semitism didn't vanish after the Twentieth Party Congress. After graduating, I kept working at the school, but teaching a different subject - the history of the USSR. I hoped that I would be able to teach history at the Institution of Higher Education. I was told that there was a vacancy in the Aviation Technology Institute. The job opening was that of a teacher of the history of the Communist Party. I called them, introduced myself and I was scheduled for an interview. I went to the human resources department. The head of the HR department looked at my diploma and asked me directly about my nationality. My response was that it was the same as Karl Marx's. The director of the HR department had a good sense of humor. He said that if Karl Marx had been alive, it would also have been difficult for him to be a history teacher.

I gave up looking for a job at the institute and post-graduate studies. I worked at the school until 1970 and went to work for the technical vocational school as a teacher of history and esthetics. I worked there for ten years, until 1980. I was of pension age and I was told that it was time for me to retire. Maybe it was connected with my nationality as well. But I couldn't stay without work and was employed at a hydro equipment plant as a planning engineer. My office wasn't far from my house. In 1990, I quit my job as there was a job opening in the policlinic and I went to work there as a deputy chief physician on the issues of civil defense. I am still working there. In the middle of the 1970s my wife, Eva, went to work with the Council of Tourism. Eva found her job interesting. She worked as a guide accompanying groups of tourists. She worked there until 1982, before retirement.

Our family had a way of life, common for the rest of the Soviet families. My wife and I weren't religious and raised our children as atheists. We didn't mark religious holidays at home. We celebrated birthdays of the family members and such Soviet holidays as 1st May and 7th November, Soviet Army Day 43, and Victory Day. On those days my wife cooked festive dishes and we invited guests. On vacations the whole family either went to the seaside or to the country house we rented for the holidays. The children went to school. They were pioneers, then Komsomol members.

Eva insisted that our daughter should go to music school besides having compulsory education. My son didn't have an ear for music, as it turned out. After finishing school, my daughter entered the music department of the Moscow Teachers' Training Institute. Diana got married during her studies at the institute. My wife and I wanted our daughter to marry a Jew. It happened that way. Her husband was a Jew, born in Moscow. His name was Joseph Ognyaev. He was Diana's age. When they got married, he was a student at the Moscow Transport Institute. Diana kept her maiden name after getting married. Her son Alexander, born in 1970, took the last name of Manilov.

After graduation Diana worked at the school as a music teacher. Her husband worked for the Machine Building Scientific Research Institute, as an engineer. Diana's son, Alexander, graduated from the mathematics department of Moscow University [M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, the best University in the Soviet Union, also well know abroad for its high level of education and research], and was employed by some good company as a programmer. In 1994 Alexander got married and in 1995 my great-grandchild, Nikita Manilov, was born. Our life seemed good, but shortly after childbirth, Alexander and his wife perished in a car crash. Diana left her job and started taking care of Nikita. My wife and I are trying to help her out the best way we can. Of course, death is terrifying and unexpected. It is natural when children bury their parents, but when the grandparent has to bury his grandson it is...

Having finished school, my son Vladimir entered the physics and mathematics department of Moscow University. After graduation, he got an assignment to one of Moscow's scientific and research plants. He got married at a mature age. His wife is Nadezhda Smirnova. She was born in the Ural town of Glazov. Nadezhda is ten years younger than Vladimir. They don't have children. Nadezhda is not a Jew, but my wife and I didn't object to their marriage, as we saw that they loved each other. It was the most important thing for us. Nadezhda is an economist. Now she is working at a water pond department as HR director. My wife and I have wonderful relations with our children's families. They often call on us and we feel their heed and care.

In the 1970s, mass immigration to Israel started. My wife and I weren't going to immigrate. Both of us worked, and made pretty good money and the children were also settled. There was no need for us to leave our relatives and comfortable life. If our children wanted to leave, we would do our best to leave with them. Our children didn't intend to leave, so there was no sense for two elderly people to leave their dearest ones. Many of our relatives left at that time. My cousin Jacob, son of my father's brother Sunya, is currently living in Israel. He is a retired colonel. We write letters to each other, sometimes he calls. Both of my sisters immigrated with their families in the 1990s. The eldest, Sarah, lives in Kholon, Israel with her family. My younger sister, Raisa, immigrated to New York, USA. Both of them are happy with their new lives.

My parents lived in Kharkov. Almost every year we went to see them, when we were on vacation. We also wrote to them on a regular basis. My father died in 1970 at the age of 93 and my mother died ten years later, i.e. in 1980. She was buried next to my father.

When in the middle of the 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev 44 declared the new course of the Party, perestroika 45, I took it as a breath of fresh air. I liked Gorbachev as a personality as well. Finally our leader was a young man, who spoke distinctively and literately, was well-read and sociable, not like the previous leaders. We were happy with the things introduced by Gorbachev at the beginning of perestroika, thinking it a panacea from all troubles in our society. Then the pace of perestroika was hindered and it wasn't clear what was going on. It was as if somebody wanted to make things worse for the people so as to be disappointed in perestroika.

The financial position of many people worsened considerably. Many necessary products weren't found in the stores, and prices escalated. All those things, in the end, caused the breakup of the USSR [in 1991]. I disapproved of those things before, and I don't approve of them now. Our country was a great and powerful state, respected, valued and feared by everybody in the world. And who are we now? From the standpoint of the economy, Russia has become a semi-colonial country and our power and strength aren't determined by our machine-building plants, or prosperity of military and mining industries. We were the main source of raw materials supply to the capitalist world. There is hardly anything good in our independence. It would have been better to preserve the good things that were in the USSR, and not bring everything to the naught and build nothing in the shambles.

Jewish life began to revive after perestroika. In 1987, two Jewish officers, the colonels Sokol and Goldsberg, acquired permission in the central committee of the Communist Party to open a Jewish library in Moscow. At first, that library was housed in Sokol's apartment as they couldn't find any other premise for it. It was the first step, and then the Jewish Cultural Center was founded in Moscow. The all-Russian society of the Jewish veterans of war and ghetto prisoners was established by that center. Then our council of the Jewish War Veterans was founded. Since the foundation of the council I have been the executive secretary.

I didn't become religious. I have always been an atheist and cannot believe in the existence of God. Maybe I'm wrong, but I'm too old to change my views. I started respecting Judaism in 1991. The breakup of the USSR was preceded by a putsch [see 1991 Moscow coup d'etat] 45, accompanied by the barricades outside, crowds of people standing up for their right to live in a democratic country. During the putsch three young lads died under caterpillars of the tanks, brought to Moscow. One of them was a Jew, a 27- year-old guy called Ilia Krichevskiy. Those who perished on

the 24th August were buried with honors in Vagankovksoye cemetery in Moscow. The three of them were posthumously recognized as Heroes of the Soviet Union.

When the parents of Krichevskiy were asked where they wanted their son to be buried, they replied that they were Jews and wanted their son to be buried in accordance with the Jewish traditions. I think that the Krichevskiy family had two reasons to be heroic. The first hero is the son, who fought for democracy, and the other heroes are the parents, because owing to them the world found out about the Jews in the former Soviet Union. It was a revelation for me. I have been a member of the Party for fifty years, sincerely believing the words of Karl Marx regarding religion being the opium for the peoples. After the funeral of Krichevskiy, I started deeply respecting religion, considering it a spiritual incentive and force. I understood that religion had equal rights with the other ideologies. There should be a place for religion in this world.

I cannot say my wife also was indifferent to the Jewish life. She began working in a Moscow synagogue for free. She was involved in charity work assisting the elderly people and indigent families. All other thematic events were supported by the synagogue. The latter provided the premises for the veterans and also took care of the catering for the festive get- togethers. Then other Jewish charitable organization started to appear. It was a big help for the needy, especially for the old people.

In 2000, a tragedy occurred in our family. My wife got severely ill, she had a paralysis, and as a result her legs were paralyzed and she wasn't able to walk. She was unsuccessfully operated on the spine. One of her legs became normal, the other one remained numb. Eva takes the pain to walk around the house, but it's very difficult for her and she is using some type of contraption. My wife courageously fights her disease. When Eva got ill, she began composing verses. It helped her get distracted from the pain. She keeps on composing verses now and it helps her psychologically.

I try to spend more time at home with my wife, and take up most of the chores. I'm not sure whether I would have managed to do all the things with my crippled hand without the support and assistance of the Jewish charitable organizations. Twice a week a visiting nurse from Hesed 46 comes to us. She cleans the apartment and cooks food for us. Once in two days we receive meals on the wheels from the synagogue for the both of us. It helps us out a lot. This is the way we live, day after day. I am trying to be useful to people and this gives me a stimulus not to give up to my age and not to become senile.

Glossary:

1 Moscow Council of the Jewish War Veterans
founded in 1988 by the Moscow municipal Jewish community. The main purpose of the organization is mutual assistance as well as unification of front-line Jews, collection and publishing of recollections about the war, and arranging meetings with the public and youth.

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 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.

4 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

5 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.

6 Pogroms in Ukraine

In the 1920s there were many anti-Semitic gangs in Ukraine. They killed Jews and burnt their houses, they robbed their houses, raped women and killed children.

7 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.

8 Denikin, Anton Ivanovich (1872-1947)

White Army general. During the Russian Civil War he fought against the Red Army in the South of

Ukraine.

9 Jewish self-defense movement

In Russia Jews organized self-defense groups to protect the Jewish population and Jewish property from the rioting mobs in pogroms, which often occurred in compliance with the authorities and, at times, even at their instigation. During the pogroms of 1881-82 self-defense was organized spontaneously in different places. Following pogroms at the beginning of the 20th century, collective defense units were set up in the cities and towns of Belarus and Ukraine, which raised money and bought arms. The nucleus of the self-defense movement came from the Jewish labor parties and their military units, and it had a widespread following among the rest of the people. Organized defense groups are known to have existed in 42 cities.

10 Keep in touch with relatives abroad

The authorities could arrest an individual corresponding with his/her relatives abroad and charge him/her with espionage, send them to concentration camp or even sentence them to death.

11 Common name

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

12 Russian stove

Big stone stove stoked with wood. They were usually built in a corner of the kitchen and served to heat the house and cook food. It had a bench that made a comfortable bed for children and adults in wintertime.

13 Young Octobrist

In Russian Oktyabrenok, or 'pre-pioneer', designates Soviet children of seven years or over preparing for entry into the pioneer organization.

14 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.

15 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.

16 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.

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 October Revolution Day

October 25 (according to the old calendar), 1917 went down in history as victory day for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia. This day is the most significant date in the history of the USSR. Today the anniversary is celebrated as 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation' on November 7.

19 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.

20 Enemy of the people
Soviet official term; euphemism used for real or assumed political opposition.

21 Invasion of Poland
The German attack of Poland on 1st September 1939 is widely considered the date in the West for the start of World War II. After having gained both Austria and the Bohemian and Moravian parts of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was confident that he could acquire Poland without having to fight Britain and France. (To eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union fighting if Poland were attacked, Hitler made a pact with the Soviet Union, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.) On the morning of 1st September 1939, German troops entered Poland. The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air, and they also aimed at civilians. On 1st September, the beginning of the attack, Great Britain and France sent Hitler an ultimatum - withdraw German forces from Poland or Great Britain and France would go to war against Germany. On 3rd September, with Germany's forces penetrating deeper into Poland, Great Britain and France both declared war on Germany.

22 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.

23 Soviet-Finnish War (1939-40)
The Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939 to seize the Karelian Isthmus. The Red Army was halted at the so-called Mannengeim line. The League of Nations expelled the USSR from its ranks. In February-March 1940 the Red Army broke through the Mannengeim line and reached Vyborg. In March 1940 a peace treaty was signed in Moscow, by which the Karelian Isthmus, and some other areas, became part of the Soviet Union.

24 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.

25 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.

26 Order of the Red Star
Established in 1930, it was awarded for achievements in the defense of the motherland, the promotion of military science and the development of military equipments, and for courage in battle. The Order of the Red Star has been awarded over 4,000,000 times.

27 Stalingrad Battle (17 July 1942- 2 February1943) The Stalingrad, South- Western and Donskoy Fronts stopped the advance of German armies in the vicinity of Stalingrad
On 19-20 November 1942 the soviet troops undertook an offensive and encircled 22 German divisions (330 thousand people) in the vicinity of Stalingrad. The Soviet troops eliminated this German grouping. On 31 January 1943 the remains of the 6th German army headed by General Field Marshal Paulus surrendered (91 thousand people). The victory in the Stalingrad battle was of huge political, strategic and international significance.

28 SMERSH
Russian abbreviation for 'Smert Shpionam' meaning Death to Spies. It was a counterintelligence department in the Soviet Union formed during World War II, to secure the rear of the active Red Army, on the front to arrest 'traitors, deserters, spies, and criminal elements'. The full name of the entity was USSR People's Commissariat of Defense Chief Counterintelligence Directorate 'SMERSH'. This name for the counterintelligence division of the Red Army was introduced on 19th April 1943, and worked as a separate entity until 1946. It was headed by Viktor Abakumov. At the same time a SMERSH directorate within the People's Commissariat of the Soviet Navy and a SMERSH department of the NKVD were created. The main opponent of SMERSH in its counterintelligence activity was Abwehr, the German military foreign information and counterintelligence department. SMERSH activities also included 'filtering' the soldiers recovered from captivity and the population of the gained territories. It was also used to punish within the NKVD itself; allowed to investigate, arrest and torture, force to sign fake confessions, put on a show trial, and either send to the camps or shoot people. SMERSH would also often be sent out to find and kill defectors, double agents, etc.; also used to maintain military discipline in the Red Army by means of barrier forces, that were supposed to shoot down the Soviet troops in the cases of retreat. SMERSH was also used to hunt down 'enemies of the people' outside Soviet territory.

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

30 Gulag
The Soviet system of forced labor camps in the remote regions of Siberia and the Far North, which was first established in 1919. However, it was not until the early 1930s that there was a significant number of inmates in the camps. By 1934 the Gulag, or the Main Directorate for Corrective Labor Camps, then under the Cheka's successor organization the NKVD, had several million inmates. The prisoners included murderers, thieves, and other common criminals, along with political and religious dissenters. The Gulag camps made significant contributions to the Soviet economy during the rule of Stalin. Conditions in the camps were extremely harsh. After Stalin died in 1953, the population of the camps was reduced significantly, and conditions for the inmates improved somewhat.

31 GPU
State Political Department, the state security agency of the USSR, that is, its punitive body.

32 Hero of the Soviet Union
Honorary title established on 16th April 1934 with the Gold Star medal instituted on 1st August 1939, by Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Awarded to both military and civilian personnel for personal or collective deeds of heroism rendered to the USSR or socialist society.

33 Order of the Great Patriotic War
1st Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for skillful command of their units in action. 2nd Class: established 20th May 1942, awarded to officers and enlisted men of the armed forces and security troops and to partisans, irrespective of rank, for lesser personal valor in action.

34 Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad
established by the decree of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the USSR as of 22nd December 1942. 750,000 people were conferred with that medal.

35 Rokossovskiy, Konstantin Konstantinovich (1896-1968)
Marshal of the Soviet Union (1944), Hero of the Soviet Union (twice in 1944, 1945). Born into the family of a railroad man in Velikiye Luki. In October 1917 he joined the Red Army. During the Great Patriotic War he was Army Commander in the Moscow battle, commander of the Bryansk and Don fronts (Stalingrad battle), Central, Belarussian, 1st and 2nd Belarussian fronts (Vistula\Oder and Berlin operations). From 1945-49 chief commander of the northern group of armed forces. From 1949-56 Minister of National Defense and deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers of the PRP. From 1956-57 and 1958-62 Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR.

36 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.

37 Campaign against 'cosmopolitans'

The campaign against 'cosmopolitans', i.e. Jews, was initiated in articles in the central organs of the Communist Party in 1949. The campaign was directed primarily at the Jewish intelligentsia and it was the first public attack on Soviet Jews as Jews. 'Cosmopolitans' writers were accused of hating the Russian people, of supporting Zionism, etc. Many Yiddish writers as well as the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested in November 1948 on charges that they maintained ties with Zionism and with American 'imperialism'. They were executed secretly in 1952. The anti-Semitic Doctors' Plot was launched in January 1953. A wave of anti-Semitism spread through the USSR. Jews were removed from their positions, and rumors of an imminent mass deportation of Jews to the eastern part of the USSR began to spread. Stalin's death in March 1953 put an end to the campaign against 'cosmopolitans'.

38 Odessa

The Jewish community of Odessa was the second biggest Jewish community in Russia. According to the census of 1897 there were 138,935 Jews in Odessa, which was 34,41% of the local population. There were 7 big synagogues and 49 prayer houses in Odessa. There were heders in 19 prayer houses.

39 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.

40 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.

41 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.

42 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.

43 Soviet Army Day
The Russian imperial army and navy disintegrated after the outbreak of the Revolution of 1917, so the Council of the People's Commissars created the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on a voluntary basis. The first units distinguished themselves against the Germans on February 23, 1918. This day became the 'Day of the Soviet Army' and is nowadays celebrated as 'Army Day'.

44 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.

45 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.

16 1991 Moscow coup d'etat
Starting spontaniously on the streets of Moscow, its leaders went public on 19th August. TASS (Soviet Telegraphical Agency) made an announcement that Gorbachev had been relieved of his duties for health reasons. His powers were assumed by Vice President Gennady Yanayev. A State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP) was established, led by eight officials, including KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov, Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, and Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov. Seizing on President Mikhail Gorbachev's summer absence from the capital, eight of the

Soviet leader's most trusted ministers attempted to take control of the government. Within three days, the poorly planned coup collapsed and Gorbachev returned to the Kremlin. But an era had abruptly ended. The Soviet Union, which the coup plotters had desperately tried to save, was dead.

47 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.