Vladimir Goldman

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Odessa
Ukraine
Interviewer: Natalia Fomina
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We began to work with Vladimir Goldman on 24th September 2002. He was mortally ill at that time but it was his wish to tell us about his life. In fact he recollected his last strength to do so. We spoke in a large room full of books and the toys of his grandson. He was very weak and lying down throughout the interview. However, he still insisted that I should be served tea.

Vladimir Mironovich Goldman died on 9th October 2002. Hundreds of people came to his funeral: representatives of the Gemilut Hesed and all public organizations of the town. He was buried in accordance with Jewish traditions in the Jewish cemetery, near the graves of his parents, Maria Frenkel-Goldman and Miron Goldman. Four rabbis from Odessa, Nikolaev and Kherson lowered his coffin into the grave.

My family background

My grandfather on my mother's side, Natan Frenkel, was born in Proskurov, Podolsk province, in the early 1860s. My mother told me that my grandfather was very religious. He followed the kashrut, fasted on Yom Kippur and observed all traditions. He attended the synagogue, where he had a seat of his own, and prayed regularly. He had a tallit and all the other necessary accessories. He wore a black jacket, white shirt and a hat. He leased a plot of land from a landlord and hired employees to farm it. He gave crops to the landlord and left a portion for himself. He provided well for his family. My grandfather had a house in the Kut neighborhood at the outskirts of Proskurov. There were five or six rooms in the house. There were also sheds in the yard, but they didn't have a garden.

My grandmother, Enia Frenkel, was born in the middle of the 1860s. She wore a wig when she was young. When she was old she covered her head with a shawl. My grandmother was a housewife and had a domestic aid who came to do housekeeping chores on Saturdays. My grandmother taught all her daughters how to cook and lay the table. My mother went to the market with my

grandmother. Local farmers from the neighboring villages sold their products there: poultry, butter, milk, vegetables and fruit. My grandmother taught her how to make the best choices at the market. At dinner the whole family got together at the table. My grandfather sat at the head of the table and said a blessing over every dish.

My mother told me a lot about her family. She was very proud of their closeness. On Sabbath they dressed up and sat at the table with the visiting relatives. My grandmother lit two candles and my grandfather said a prayer. The family celebrated all Jewish holidays, but my mother's favorite holidays were Chanukkah and Purim. On Chanukkah the children got gifts and Chanukkah gelt, and on Purim my grandmother made delicious hamantashen. On Yom Kippur the adults fasted and my mother observed this tradition until the end of her life.

My grandfather and grandmother had twelve children. Three of them died in infancy. The rest of them were Leo, Fenia, Naum, Marcus, Sophia, Betia, Maria, Rosa and Isaac. The sons studied in cheder and the girls received religious education at home - a melamed taught them the prayers. Proskurov was a small town and the children left for other places to live their own lives. Several of them moved to Odessa. In the late 1990s my cousins and I made an effort to create 'The Frenkel family tree'. We managed to put together some things.

My mother's oldest sister, Fenia, was born in 1882. She was a midwife. Fenia also took part in revolutionary activities. She married a Russian called Nikolay Baier. In the 1910s revolutionaries were persecuted. Fenia and her husband left for America. Aunt Fenia visited the USSR in the 1920s. She brought my parents some clothes, but they were afraid to wear them - there were so many jealous people around that might have reported to the authorities. In the 1930s, when it was dangerous to have relatives abroad 1, our family kept it a secret that my mother had a sister in America. I only heard about this after the war. Fenia died in the 1960s. Her husband Nikolay died in an old people's home some time afterwards. After Fenia died her relatives sent us her family photographs.

The next children were twins: Sophia and Leo, born in Proskurov in 1881. Leo moved to Odessa and got married in the early 1900s. I know that they lived in Peresyp 2. He had four children: Michael, Alexandr, Betia and Rosa. Michael, the oldest, was born in 1904. His younger daughter, Rosa, married Israel Zaslavskiy before the war and lived in Leningrad.

Sophia was the most talented one in the family. She finished grammar school in Proskurov and moved to Odessa where she graduated from the Medical University. She married her colleague, Ilia Kornblitt, a physician. Their daughter, Zhenia, was born in 1922. Zhenia entered the Medical Institute in Odessa before the war. During the war the Kornblitt family were in the ghetto. Zhenia's fiancé, Henry Ostashevskiy, paid ransom for Zhenia to free her from the ghetto. There were Romanian guards in the ghetto, and it was possible to negotiate with them. She lived with counterfeit documents during the war. In 1942 her daughter, Valentine, was born. Ilia was killed in the ghetto. Sophia was in the Jewish ghetto in Domanevka village 3. Sophia and Zhenia survived the war. Sophia's family was the closest to our family.

The twins, Naum and Marcus, were born in 1884. Naum moved to Odessa and married Esphir Tsukerman. They had two children: Lyusik and Genia. Naum and his wife were killed in a ghetto near Odessa in 1942. Their children survived the war. Lyusik was at the front and Genia was in evacuation. Lyusik died in the 1990s, and Genia passed away in Moscow in 2001.

Marcus lived in Proskurov all his life. His wife's name was Enta. They had two daughters: Lyusia, born in 1924, and Nyuta. Marcus died in the 1950s.

The next child, Betia, was born in 1890. She also moved to Odessa. She was a midwife. She married Emmanuil Rozenberg. He was an economist. They had two children: Nyusia and Mark. Emmanuil perished in Sevastopol at the beginning of the war.

My mother's younger sister, Rosa, was born in 1895. She entered the Medical Institute in Odessa. Upon graduation she worked as a physiatrician. Rosa married a German man. His last name was Erlich. Their son, Oktav, was born in 1930. Rosa's marriage failed and she divorced her husband before the war. Rosa and Oktav failed to evacuate. Rosa was aware of the Germans' attitude towards Jews and always had morphine with her. When the Germans occupied Odessa she poisoned her son and herself to avoid the horrors of the ghetto.

Isaac was the youngest in the family, I believe. He was born at the end of the 1890s. I think he lived in Proskurov.

My parents

My mother, Maria, was born in Proskurov in 1893. She was a very beautiful woman. Her sisters were also beautiful. My mother finished a Russian primary school. In the early 1920s she moved to Odessa and got a job as a hat maker. She got little money for her work, rented rooms and had meals at cheap canteens for workers and laborers. Her older sisters, Sophia and Rosa, helped her as much as they could. In 1925 Sophia and her husband met doctor Miron Goldman. He was single and Sophia decided to introduce him to her younger sister, Maria.

My grandfather on my father's side, Israel Goldman, was born in the town of Akkerman, Bessarabia 4, in the early 1860s. Akkerman, which is now called Belgorod-Dnestrovsk, was located on the bank of the Dnestr firth. It was a picturesque town. In the 1980s I visited it to look for my grandparents' graves and saw gravestones from the 17th century at the local cemetery. The town had Russian, Ukrainian, Moldavian, Gagauz 5, Hungarian and Jewish inhabitants. There was a synagogue and a Jewish community. My grandfather owned a wine store and a tavern on the outskirts of town. He died in the 1890s. My grandmother, Masia Goldman, raised their five sons alone.

My grandmother was younger than my grandfather. She was born in the late 1860s. My father told me that she was a very special person. After my grandfather died she took over his business. The store was in the same house where they lived, and from what my father told me, I imagine that it was just a room with a separate door. Jews had their houses spread all over the town. My father told me that they got on very well with their neighbors. During a big pogrom in 1905 a Christian priest, their neighbor, gave them shelter in his house.

On Pesach Grandmother Masia cooked traditional Jewish food: gefilte fish and pudding from matzah that she bought at the synagogue. She put a decanter of wine on the table. They went to the synagogue on holidays and celebrated Sabbath. My father didn't tell me whether they followed the kashrut. My grandmother died in the 1910s before I was born.

My father had four brothers, but I only know details about two of them. His brother Leo was born around 1884. He lived in Akkerman. He was a merchant before the Revolution of 1917 6. He spoke Romanian and often went to purchase goods in Romania. I believe he was a merchant after the

Revolution, too, but I'm not sure. He evacuated from Bessarabia in 1941 and came to Odessa. He was in the ghetto with us. He was shot in Dalnik 7 near Odessa on 23rd February 1942.

My father's other brother, Zeilik, was born in 1886. He also lived in Akkerman. He was married twice. He had a daughter, Mirrah, with his first wife. His first wife died. His second wife's name was Rukhl. They had two children: a son, Sasha, and a daughter, Bronia. During the Great Patriotic War 8 he was in evacuation in Fergana. After the war he returned to Belgorod-Dnestrovsk and continued to work in commerce. He died in the 1970s. Mirrah moved to Israel in the 1980s. She died in 1989. Sasha died in Rovno in 1992, and Bronia in Belgorod-Dnestrovsk in 1998.

My father, Miron Goldman, was born in 1888. In 1907 he finished the 5th grade of a Russian secondary school in Akkerman. After that he studied pharmacy in the Moldavian village of Budaki and began to work in the village. He also treated people from the surrounding villages. He was called to families at any time of the day and night.

In 1914, when World War I began, my father was mobilized to the tsarist army. He was an assistant doctor in a hospital. Between 1920 and 1924 he studied at the Medical Faculty of the Donskoy University in Rostov and later continued his studies at the Medical Institute in Odessa. Upon graduation from the Institute my father worked at the Skin Diseases and Veneorological Hospital that became a Skin and Veneorology Research Institute later. [Editor's note: At present this building houses the Israeli Cultural Center.] In 1928 my father reaffirmed his qualification as a veneorologist at the Professional Education Commission of the Ministry of Education of the USSR.

Growing up

My mother and my father got married in 1925. After the wedding they settled down in a very small apartment. They lived there until 1938. My mother worked as a part time nurse before I was born. She didn't have any medical education, but she learned from my father. My sister, Tamara, was born in 1926 and I followed on 15th April 1934. I remember our yard and our apartment on the 2nd floor. It was a one-bedroom apartment with a very small kitchen. There was a stove in the kitchen that heated the whole apartment. Our neighbors were German colonists 9: the family of Berzer, father, mother and three sons, who were recruited to the Soviet army before the Great Patriotic War.

In 1938 my parents borrowed some money and exchanged the old apartment for a bigger one. I remember that they were paying back their debt for a number of years. It was a three-bedroom apartment: a living room with a balcony and two smaller bedrooms. There was a small kitchen and a toilet in the apartment, which was rare at the time. There was running water and a sink in the kitchen. The stove was stoked with wood and coal. There was also a shed in the yard. It was very hot in this apartment in summer - we opened the windows at night and closed them during the day. We had a cupboard, a table in the middle of the living room, a few wardrobes and chairs. My father worked, and my mother was a housewife. We weren't a wealthy family. We didn't have many clothes. My father had one suit that he wore to work and on holidays. He had a low salary, and we couldn't afford much from what he was earning.

In the 1930s, during the Stalinist repression [the so-called Great Terror] 10, he was called to the GPU 11 office. He never mentioned anything about it to the family. My father was afraid of any anti-Soviet discussions and we never discussed anything against the Soviet authorities in our

family.

In the summer my father took on additional work in a recreation center named after V. I. Lenin in Kuyalnik 12. He was staying in a room there and my mother, sister and I were staying with him. The center was near the sea and we had an opportunity to have a wonderful vacation at the seashore.

My father was a tall and thin man. He used to take me to the kindergarten teaching me numbers and letters on our way. He was an atheist and his 'Lord' was his conscience. He told me to be good to other people. He said that even if ten people would forget that you were good to them the eleventh would remember and pay you back tenfold for what you did for him.

My mother came from a religious family and brought Jewish traditions into our family. I can't say that we observed all traditions, but my mother always celebrated Jewish holidays. She told us about the history of these holidays. She was a kind woman and always shared what we had with other people. She always treated visitors to a meal. She used to make a big bowl of soup, and my friends always knew that they could have a bowl of soup at our place, even during the most difficult times. My mother cooked traditional food: chicken soup or broth, stuffed chicken neck, potato pancakes - latkes and forshmak. She also made soup with beans and used the beans from it for a second course. She was very handy about housekeeping and always had some savings. She made gefilte fish on holidays.

My mother didn't have any education, but she was smart and sensitive and very good at resolving everyday issues. My father could always rely on her. They lived a long life together and were always affectionate in the way they treated each other. We spoke Russian in the family. Sometimes my mother and father switched to Yiddish, especially when they didn't want my sister or me to understand what they were talking about.

I have very warm memories of my childhood with my sister, Tamara. She started to study at the Russian secondary school in 1933. She had several Russian friends. Her friends always supported us, especially when we were in the ghetto during the war. Tamara was a cheerful and artistic girl. She was fond of poetry and read a lot. She was easy-going, sociable, charming and kind. She was the life and soul of any party. I enjoyed spending time with her. Tamara helped my mother about the house.

My parents had many friends; most of them were Jews. My parents were very close with my mother's sisters and brothers. My mother's brother Leo lived in Peresyp. My mother's sister Rosa lived in the center of the town. My parents were very close with my mother's sister Sophia and her husband Ilia. Ilia was a very intelligent man. They lived near the Music College. They had a spacious apartment with a big living room where they received guests. They always had pets: a dog, pigeons and exotic turtles. I enjoyed visiting them, but Ilia scared me a little. His face still showed traces of lupus that he had after he returned from the Soviet-Finnish war 13. His face was covered with scabs, but he was nice to me and told me not to be afraid of his looks. We got together on Jewish and Soviet holidays and at birthdays. We spoke Russian and sometimes Yiddish.

The war begins

On 22nd June 1941 the war began. I was to begin school on 1st September, but the front was near Odessa so I didn't. The hospital where my father worked was converted into a military hospital. My father became the director of the hospital. His brothers, Leo and Zeilik, and their families were going to evacuation by train. Their train stopped in Odessa for a day and they came to say goodbye to us. Uncle Leo fell ill and stayed with us. My father submitted his request for the evacuation of his family to the district party committee. We received boat tickets, but my mother said that we had to go with my father. The authorities were promising my father to evacuate him later with other officials, but they didn't keep their promise. We all stayed. They didn't evacuate the hospital or its patients. My father continued working even during the occupation.

On one of those days an incident happened that confirmed my father's saying that goodness has its own ways. At the beginning of the occupation the Soviet counterintelligence blasted the building of the town council. The Germans began to take hostages. They shot or hung all of their captives in Alexandrovskiy Garden: young and old, communists and Jews. My mother and father were going home after visiting Aunt Rosa. They were captured by a policeman. He asked them who they were. My father said, 'I'm a doctor' and the policeman replied, 'Ah, a doctor. A doctor is a zhyd [a kike], a prosecutor is a zhyd. You were spoiling our life, and we will do away with you'. He was escorting them to the commandant office when they met two young girls of about 18 years old. They asked him whom he was escorting, and he said that they were zhyds and that they would be shot. The girls told him that the man was a venereologist and cured many people. They suggested that the policeman went for a walk with them leaving my parents alone, and he did let my father and mother go. My father said these girls were like two angels. He had never treated women, which means that one of my father's patients must have told the girls who he was. Tamara and I were waiting for our parents at home worrying about them when the door opened and they came in.

Raids began in the town at the end of October. The Germans were capturing Jews taking them to schools where they were held until further decisions were made about them. When the policemen were escorting us from our house some of the children shouted 'zhyd' at me - this was the first time I heard this word. We were taken to school #122. Some of the people from there were sent to prison, some went to work and some were taken to Dalnik where they were shot. At that time we didn't know where the people were taken.

The school building got overcrowded. We didn't get any food and ate what we had taken from home: dried bread, onions and salt. Over 60 years have passed since then, but I still remember the taste of this dry bread. There was no water and the toilets didn't work. We were taken to Olgievskiy Garden for roll-calls. Later we were taken to prison in Odessa. It was overcrowded, too. People were standing and lying on the floors. The Germans were continuously beating people. They took away small young girls and raped them near the prison. It was a nightmare.

On the next day the Germans began to form groups of 100-200 men. Later we found out that they were taken to clear fields from mines in the vicinity of Odessa. They were forced to march the field and the mines exploded killing people. At the end of the day the survivors were shot by the Germans. We got to know later that about 25,000 Jews and prisoners of war were taken to a gunpowder storage facility in Tolbukhin Street on 26th October. They were forced into the barracks. The Germans poured gasoline over the barracks and set them on fire. The stench didn't vanish for several weeks.

We starved in the prison. There was no food left, and there were rumors that we would be shot. This lasted until the beginning of December 1941 when we were released from prison. We went home. We had good neighbors and they let us in. Some Jews weren't allowed to go back to their apartments. People drew crosses with candles on the gates to indicate that there were no Jews in the building. Our apartment was occupied by our neighbor. We moved into her apartment. We didn't have anything with us. Our neighbors brought us some things: a bed cover, a pillow and something else.

We didn't have money or any belongings to exchange for food. My mother got a big bowl of soybeans somewhere. It saved us. There was an inn nearby and the Romanians kept their horses there. [The interviewee is referring to the Romanian occupation of Odessa.] 14 Someone told a Romanian officer that my father was a venereologist. This officer told my father that if he cured him he would spare his life and if not he would shoot him. He had gonorrhea. The only medication my father had was sulfidine, but he cured the officer. I remember that this Romanian brought my father a big loaf of bread, a bottle of wine and some other food. My father fell ill with typhoid. The only treatment my mother could give him was tea with a little bit of wine in it, but it helped and my father recovered.

Winter began, and it was very cold. Policemen and Romanians continuously came to search for weapons and partisans. We were in fear of what was going to happen to us, but our neighbors respected my father and protected us. At the end of December an order was issued for all Jews to get to Slobodka 15 before 10th January 1942. On this day our family, Uncle Leo and our Jewish neighbors went there. In Pishonovskiy Lane we met two women carrying buckets with water. They said, 'You'll be lucky. You'll survive'. It is a Russian superstition that meeting a woman with a bucket full of water means good luck. It was freezing on that day. The crowd was guarded by Romanians with dogs. I was freezing so much that I kept screaming. A Romanian officer asked my parents why I was screaming. Uncle Leo said that I had my feet and face frost-bitten. The officer told us to get into the nearest house. They were small houses with summer kitchens in the yard. We settled down in a summer kitchen. The rest of the people were taken to Dalnik and shot.

We lived in this house for ten days. When policemen came for us the landlady said that a Romanian officer ordered us to stay there, and they left us alone. My mother had a little bit of flour. She made kneydlakh. There was another raid on 20th January and we were taken to the ghetto in the Navy College. The building was overcrowded. The windows were broken and there was no heating. The sewerage didn't function. We stayed there until the spring. My father met a few doctors that he knew and they gave him an armband with a red cross on it. It meant that he was a doctor. There was no medication in the ghetto. Our family lived in a bigger room with other doctors. There were double-deck beds in the room where we slept.

Every day people were taken to Dalnik. On 23rd February 1942 almost all inmates were taken there. On this day the typhoid epidemic started in the ghetto and the guards were afraid that it would spread over town. I fell ill with typhoid. A Romanian officer came to the ghetto. He didn't believe that I had high fever and checked it himself. He let me stay along with my family. Only Leo was taken with the others because my father failed to convince the guards that he was a doctor's assistant. We never saw him again.

Those were hard days. Many people died. There was no food, and the inmates of the ghetto were trying to exchange whatever little they had for food. Our friends and acquaintances or just kind people took some food to the fence of the ghetto. They threw corn or potatoes over the fence. Our neighbors and Tamara's school friends brought us food. Even our former German neighbors, the Berzers, brought us food. I can still remember the taste of fried potatoes in a ceramic pot. The Berzers suggested to my parents that they would take me with them to save my life. My parents told me to make a decision. I decided to stay with my parents.

When I was already on my way to recovery I began to walk on the floor where we were staying and I got to the attic once. I found many small boxes with leather straps there. Many decades later I realized that these were tefillin. Older people went to the attic to pray hiding from guards and left their tefillin there.

In June or July 1942 policemen announced that the ghetto was to be closed. Policemen and Romanians told all inmates to come to the main yard. If people couldn't walk, they were taken out with their beds. We were told to stand on the right side and on the left side. The beds with patients were on the left side, and our family stood on the right. We were taken to the Sortirovochnaya railroad station and told to board railcars for coal transportation. There were so many people that it was difficult to stand. I don't remember how long we were on the way.

When the train stopped and we got out of the railcars someone cried out, 'Have they brought niggers [African Americans]?' People fell out onto the platform black from coal dust. We saw a well and drinking-troughs for cows. We rushed to the drinking-troughs, but the policemen said, 'They are for cattle and not for zhyds [kikes]'. He told us to drink from a puddle. We drank from the puddle and the water appeared to be good to us.

In the morning we started our way through the steppe. Policemen shot those who couldn't keep up with the rest. A Romanian soldier hit me on the head with his rifle-butt. We came to Piatikhatki in Beryozovskiy district. There were trailers in the steppe where we settled down. We were to farm cornfields. Nobody took any notice of age or health conditions. There were a few prisoners of war with us. Policemen were our guards. We didn't have any food and ate corn sprouts. We were punished for picking up corn.

At the end of July 1942 we were sent to Domanevka camp 16. From Domanevka we were taken to Akhmechetka camp 17 - it was a cattle farm that had been converted into a camp. The inmates were given no food. Groups of ten inmates went to fetch water and the policemen entertained themselves by shooting the last one in the group. The inmates ate grass around the camp. Later we were sent to a camp in the village of Paseka. There was a barrack in the steppe with about 200 Jews in it. They worked in a vegetable field. Life became easier. We could eat a carrot or a beetroot. My father cured the inmates of the camp. Villagers also came to ask his advice. He made ointments for them from what they brought him and used the remains to cure the inmates.

We stayed there from August 1942 to March 1944. Tamara worked in a joiner's workshop. She washed and cleaned it. My mother and father worked in the field. Some time ago I tried to obtain a certificate about our stay in the camp, but I was told that there were no documents left to confirm that we had been there. I addressed the Holocaust Museum in Washington with the same request. I received a response stating that Miron and Tamara Goldman and Maria Goldman-Frenkel were in Akhmechetka camp as of 1942. They even sent a copy of the work rooster with their signatures. I

recognized my father's handwriting. There was also another document stating that there were doctors among the inmates of Domanevka camp: Turner, Sibner, Goldman and Sushon.

In 1944 the Romanian units ran away. They were followed by the Vlasov units 18 and the Kalmyks 19, who were worse than the Germans. They took adult men with them, and we decided that my father had to escape. My father left. We didn't know where he was and went to look for him. We kept asking people where Jews were staying and found him in a barrack with Jews in another village. By that time the Germans arrived in that village. They searched the inmates of the barrack and found German pressed cotton wool, a few vials of iodine, a razor and a Soviet passport. They started shouting at my father that he was a partisan and that he had stolen the cotton wool. They intended to shoot him. A German soldier took my father outside. I fell to his knees crying and kissing his boots begging him to let my father go. I must have melted his heart, because he did.

At night there were guards around the barrack. We decided to run away. At dawn we left the barrack. We walked the whole day until we came to a village. There was a barrack with Jews near the village and Kalmyks around the village. They were cooking lamb meat. We were hungry and I managed to pick some. I took it to the barrack and my mother and other women washed and cooked them. We had some food and left again at dawn. We went in the direction of Paseka where we left Tamara. We were afraid to go to the village and were hiding in pits in the field. My mother went to the village late. She returned a few hours later and told us that the Germans registered every individual in the barrack and threatened to kill ten people if one of them disappeared. We decided to return to the barrack.

In the morning the Germans ordered us to go in the direction of the Dnestr. It was especially sad, because we could see Red Army soldiers on the opposite bank of the Yuzhniy Bug, but we were separated by the river. We kept walking for a few days. Some people approached my father asking him to tell our guards to shoot them because they were too exhausted to keep walking. Our army was close. We stopped in some village. Our family was accommodated in a cellar. The owners of the house brought us some milk and mamaliga.

In the morning Soviet secret service men came to the village. They were dirty and had no uniforms on. The mistress of the house gave them some food and they moved on. Later the regular army units came to the village. Officers from the secret service department interrogated us and allowed us to start on our way back home. We went in the direction of Odessa. Soldiers shared their food with us on our way. Villagers allowed us to stay in their homes overnight.

Odessa was liberated on 10th April. Around the same time Tamara got a lift in a vehicle with the military. She reached Odessa on 12th April. My father, mother and I returned walking home on foot. On the way we met the Kroletskiy family, my parents' acquaintances. They were also going back to Odessa. Sergey Kroletskiy was Ukrainian and his wife, Lida, was a Jew, but they kept it a secret. She was a blond with blue eyes and pretended she was Ukrainian. She spoke fluent Ukrainian. Sergey had continuous problems with the sigurantza [the Romanian secret police] or the police because he looked very much like a Jew. However, he managed to survive. They had a cow and a horse pulling a cart. They had two children: 9-year-old Natasha and 8-year- old Tolik. Sergey told Lida to get off the cart and put my mother on it. When we entered Odessa the town was still on fire: the heating plant and the bakery were ablaze. We stayed with Sergey and Lida in their small room for some time. I took the horse and the cow to pasture in the Duke's Garden, and my mother

was helping Lida with the cooking.

Post-war

After a week we went to our home and found our apartment occupied by a woman who had moved in during the occupation with a Romanian colonel. My father went to the military commandant of the town, and she was forced to leave our apartment within 24 hours. When we entered it we found no belongings of ours: no furniture, nothing. We slept on the floor the first night. My father went to work wearing Sergey's trousers and shirt. Our neighbors brought us some pieces of furniture and kitchen utensils. I still remember our old lampshade that my mother used for melting pork fat. My friends were treated to pork fat spread on a slice of bread. After the war my mother fasted regularly. I fasted along with her, although she told me not to. But I remembered all the horrors of the ghetto and starvation, and I believed that if I fasted my future children and grandchildren would not know the feeling of being hungry. I only hope that my successors will always have enough food.

Aunt Sophia returned from Domanevka to Odessa. She lived with her daughter, Zhenia, and her husband Henry and granddaughter Valentine. She continued working as a doctor. Zhenia graduated from the Medical Institute and became a physician. Henry finished theatrical school and became one of the leading actors of the Ukrainian Theater in Odessa. Valentine also graduated from the Medical Institute and defended her Candidate of Science thesis. She was a good cardiologist. Aunt Sophia died in 1962. She was buried in the Jewish cemetery. Valentine married Victor Zaslavskiy, the grandson of Leo Frenkel, Rosa's son from Leningrad. They had a daughter, Lana. Victor had leukemia. When he died in the 1980s he bequeathed to his family to move to another country. In 1989 they moved to the United States. They live in Seattle.

When we returned to Odessa my mother went to the director of the Russian secondary school and asked him to admit me to the 3rd grade. I was 10, but I hadn't gone to school yet. My father and Tamara taught me to read and write in the ghetto. The director offered me to go to the 1st grade, but my mother was afraid that I was too big and the children would laugh at me. On the one hand, she was right, but on the other hand she wasn't: I made 62 mistakes in my first dictation. I could only write in capital letters. I didn't know any arithmetic and all the years at school were very difficult for me.

My classmates, Vova Kovalyov and Igor Ustinov, were my best friends and helped me a lot. I finished lower secondary school with satisfactory marks. In the 5th grade I went in for sports. I was in the tourist club, and it was very stimulating. My friends decided to go to a technical college after we finished the 7th grade, and I decided to join them. My father wanted me to finish higher secondary school and go to university. But I felt so miserable even thinking about studying that I told him of my decision to continue my education at a technical college.

The Food Industry College seemed most attractive to me. They paid a stipend and had practical courses at the bakery or meat factory. When I told my father about my plans he burst into laughter and asked me whether I was still hungry. I said that I was thinking about my children and about the possibility of bringing them a slice of bread. But there was high competition to get into the Food Industry College and my friends decided to go to the Survey College instead. I decided to join them, and we became students in 1948. I was working hard and gradually improving. At the end of my studies I defended my thesis on the subject of 'measurement of big quantities of liquid and

gas'. I organized a tourist club in the college and we went hiking to the Crimea. There were Jewish and Russian students, but there was no anti-Semitism.

In 1948 I heard the news about Israel. I've always sympathized with this country. I've been blessed with three visits to the Promised Land. My trips were organized by the Christian organization 'Even Ether'. I went there for the first time in 1993 and my last visit was in 1998.

1952 was a difficult time because of the so-called Doctors' Plot 20. We were very concerned, but God was merciful, and my father kept his job. Izia Zaslavskiy, the husband of my cousin Rosa, a high official at the city executive committee in Leningrad, committed suicide as a result of this anti-Semitic plot. He left Rosa and their sons behind. Rosa had to go to work as a packer at a factory. Her sons both went to university, got a higher education and defended their theses. Regretfully, they died of cancer when they were young.

In 1953, when Stalin died, I was taking a course of practical training at the Lvov Instrumentation Factory. All employees were listening to the radio broadcast about his death. Many of them were crying. My fellow students and I decided to become Komsomol 21 members. When I returned to Odessa I submitted my request, but I was rejected. This was the impact of the Doctors' Plot. Jews were not admitted to the Komsomol or to the Communist Party. However, the district Komsomol committee explained their rejection was my lack of knowledge of the Beriya report 22.

I finished college in 1953 and expressed my wish to go to work in Arkhangelsk [2,000 km from Odessa]. My fellow students, Musik Volodarskiy and Senia, also came with me. We received an apartment in Severo-Dvinsk. We worked in a laboratory in Arkhangelsk. We were responsible for the inspection of all instrumentation to be installed in submarines. We arrived in Arkhangelsk in August, and in November Musik and I were recruited to the army. We were sent to a tank school in Arkhangelsk. We didn't get sufficient food there. At the beginning we had some savings to buy white bread and butter, but gradually we switched to buying brown bread and margarine until we ran out of money. After lunch at the canteen we put bread in our pockets to have it later. After school we were assigned to tank units. By the end of my service I was promoted to the rank of junior lieutenant and became the commander of a tank. I entered the Komsomol League. When I returned to Odessa in 1955 my sister Tamara bought me my first suit.

Tamara graduated from the Dentistry Faculty of the Medical Institute after the war. From 1952 until 1990 she worked in Noviye Beliary village [40 km from Odessa]. She married Zinoviy Natanzon, who had finished the Mining College in Kiev. They had two children: Irina and Michael. Irina, born in 1954, graduated from the Odessa Construction Institute. Michael failed to get a higher education in Odessa due to state anti-Semitism. He went to Tomsk where he graduated from the Faculty of Automation of Control Systems at the Tomsk Polytechnic Institute. Zinoviy died in 1983. He was buried in the Jewish cemetery. Tamara and her children moved to Israel in 1990. She died in 1994.

I couldn't find a job after I returned from the army. We recalled one of Tamara's acquaintances whose father was a partisan during the war and worked at the Starostin plant after the war. This acquaintance and I went to director of the plant to ask him to employ me. He was worried about Item 5 23. However, I was employed as an electrician. I worked in this position for about three years. My performance was noticed by my management, and I was promoted to the position of a technician. At the plant I took an active part in public activities: amateur art and tourism.

I went on business tours looking for equipment. After ten years my management was planning to appoint me secretary of the Komsomol unit of the plant, but I said to them, 'Look, the director of the plant is Ivan Solovei, the party secretary of the party unit is Tanov, the trade union leader is Stepanov. [Editor's note: These are all typical Russian names.] Now, do you really want to spoil the whole picture by adding a Goldman?' They all laughed.

I entered the Faculty of Water Supply and Sewerage at the Construction Institute. I had tried six times to enter an institute, the Polytechnic Institute, the Leningrad Technological Institute, the Institute of Refrigeration Equipment, failing over and over again. I didn't understand that the reason was anti-Semitism on the state level.

My wife

Meeting my future wife helped me. I met Maya Kangun at my friends' place. I liked her very much and she seemed to like me. We got married on 4th December 1960. I was 26 and Maya was 20. I was working at the plant, and Maya was a student at the Institute of Foreign Languages, which was incorporated into Odessa University later. Maya came from a patriarchal family. Her parents spoke Yiddish. Her father, David Isaacovich, went to the synagogue where he had a seat of his own. He was a political officer and participated in the defense of Stalingrad. He graduated from a pedagogical institute and was a teacher of mathematics. He was a very smart, intelligent and reserved man.

Maya's mother, Sopha Kangun, also graduated from a pedagogical institute. She was deputy director in a school. They celebrated Jewish holidays, cooked traditional Jewish food and lit candles. On Pesach they bought matzah. That's how I came to go to the synagogue for the first time. I had to get some matzah there, but gradually I got interested in the history and religion of the Jewish people. It was impossible to get a Torah at that time so I bought the Bible. I started reading the Old Testament. David Isaacovich gave me a number of books about the history and traditions of the Jewish people. I was very fond of reading. I've always bought books and have a good collection.

Maya's uncle, Joseph Wolfovich Goldfarb, one of the founders of the Construction Institute, helped me to enter the evening department of this institute. I worked during the day and attended classes in the evening. I studied at the Institute for six years. I got along well with my fellow students and teachers. I graduated from the Institute in 1966. In the same year I quit my job at the plant and got another job in the Housing Design Institute. I became chief engineer of the gasification project. I worked in this Institute for 27 years. I had a wonderful relationship with my colleagues. Even after I retired I continued working for them as an advisor. I also volunteered to work at the Association of Inmates of Concentration Camps and Ghetto. I became a member of the council of the Association and then its Deputy Chairman.

Our daughter, Larissa, was born in 1963. She finished secondary school in 1981 and entered the Institute of Navy Engineers. She graduated in 1986 and got a job as a construction engineer with a design company. Since 1990 she has worked for Jewish organizations. In 1995 she married Alexandr Bykov. He is Russian and a candidate of technical sciences. Their son, Dennis, was born in 1996. Last fall he started the first grade of a private Jewish school. He studies Hebrew and Jewish traditions.

My mother died in 1972. My father died in 1990 when he was 102 years old. They were both buried in the Jewish cemetery.

In the late 1980s Jewish life in Odessa started to revive. A Jewish cultural association was founded in 1989. The Sochnut [Jewish Agency] and the Joint [American Jewish Distribution Committee] also set up their offices in town. The Jewish community got back the ownership of the main synagogue in Richelieu Street. Two Jewish newspapers are published, Or sameach and Shomrey shabos.

In 1993 I was invited to the Joint and offered the position of the director of the Jewish charity center. They convinced me to accept their proposal, and I quit my work at the Institute. This was at the very beginning of the organization's work. We got an office in the Jewish Cultural Center in Vorovskogo Street, and later we moved to Polskiy Spusk. In 1996 the Jewish community from Baltimore gave our charity center a big office in Troitskaya Street. We started by providing services to 40 people that were registered at the Jewish Cultural Association. At present we provide services to about nine thousand people in Odessa and Odessa region.

Glossary

1 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.

2 Peresyp
An industrial neighborhood in the outskirts of Odessa.

3 Domanevka
District town in Odessa region. Hundreds of thousands Jews were exterminated in the camp located in this town during the war.

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

5 Gagauz
A minority group in the territory of Moldavia and the Ukraine, as well as Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece and Turkey. It numbers about 200,000 individuals. Their language is Turkic in origin. In the Ukraine their written language is based on the Russian alphabet. They are Christian.

6 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 WWI, 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.

7 Dalnik
Village 20 km from Odessa, the site of mass executions of Jews during the war.

8 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.

9 German colonists
Descendants of German peasants, who were invited by Empress Catherine II in the 18th century to settle in Russia.

10 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.

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

12 Kuyalnik

Balneal resort named after the firth called Kuyalnik on the northern-western coast of the Black Sea near Odessa.

13 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.

14 Romanian occupation of Odessa
Romanian troops occupied Odessa in October 1941. They immediately enforced anti-Jewish measures. Following the Antonescu-ordered slaughter of the Jews of Odessa, the Romanian occupation authorities deported the survivors to camps in the Golta district: 54,000 to the Bogdanovka camp, 18,000 to the Akhmetchetka camp, and 8,000 to the Domanevka camp. In Bogdanovka all the Jews were shot, with the Romanian gendarmerie, the Ukrainian police, and Sonderkommando R, made up of Volksdeutsche, taking part. In January and February 1942, 12,000 Ukrainian Jews were murdered in the two other camps. A total of 185,000 Ukrainian Jews were murdered by Romanian and German army units.

15 Slobodka
Neighborhood on the outskirts of Odessa.

16 Domanevka
District town in Odessa region. Hundreds of thousands Jews were exterminated in the camp located in this town during the war.

17 Akhmechetka
Village in the Domanevka district in the Odessa region. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were exterminated in the camp located in this village during the World War II.

18 Vlasov military
Members of the voluntary military formations of Russian former prisoners of war that fought on the German side during World War II. They were led by the former Soviet general, A. Vlasov, hence their name.

19 Kalmyk
A nationality living on the Lower Volga in Russia. During World War military formations set up by Kalmyk prisoners of war fought on the side of the Germans.

20 Doctors' Plot

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

21 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

22 Beriya, L

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

23 Item 5

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